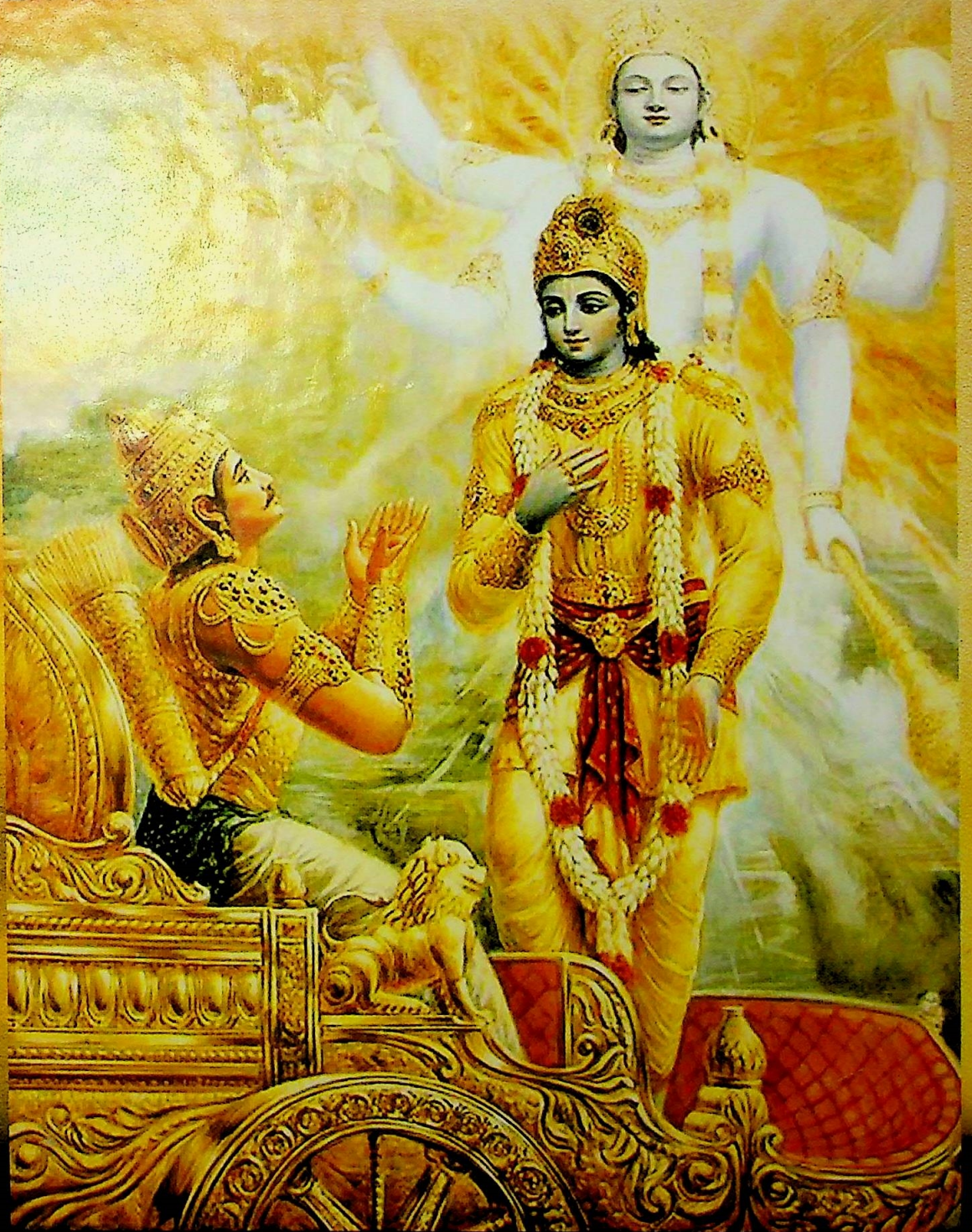
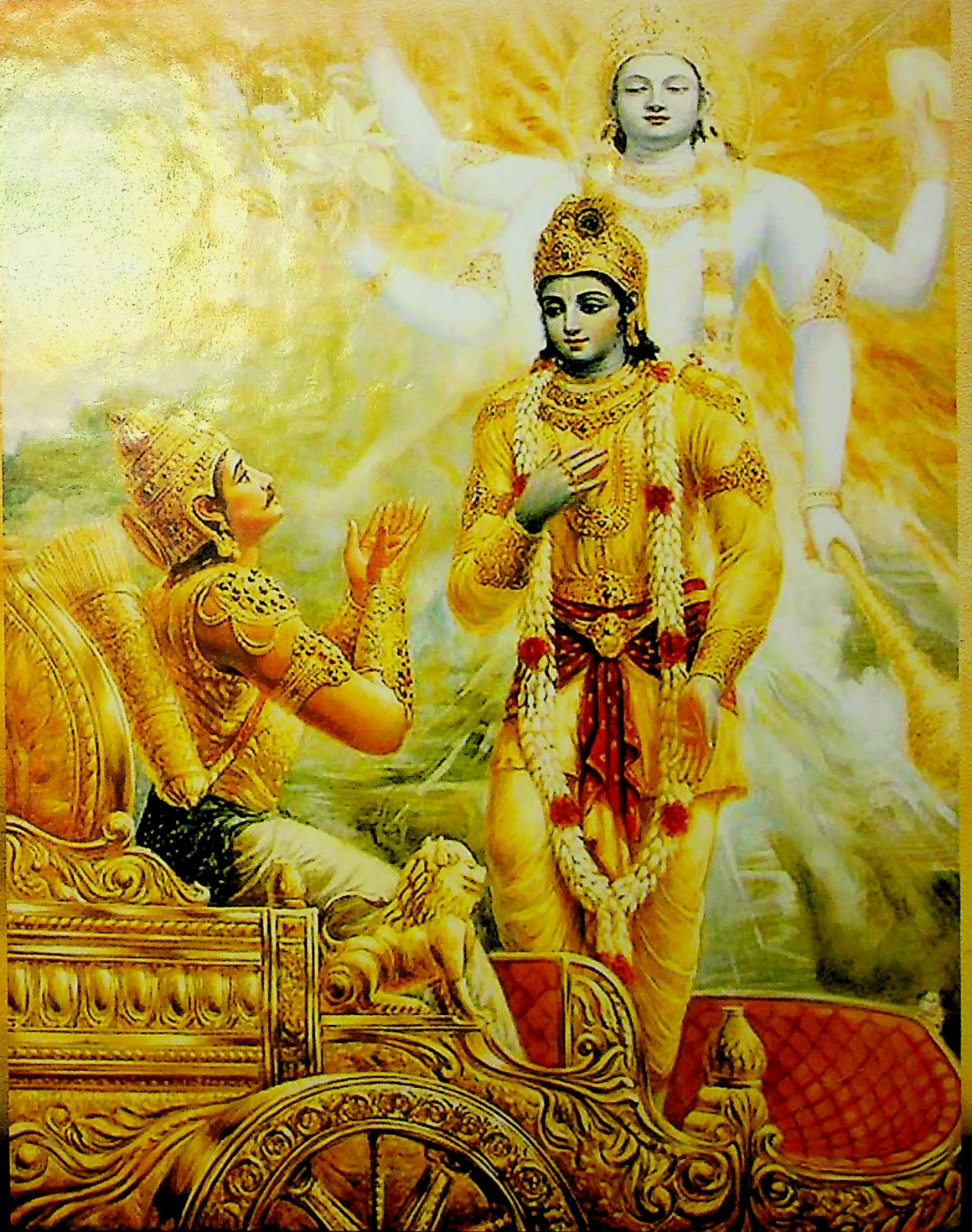


# Stories From SHRIMAD BHAGWADA





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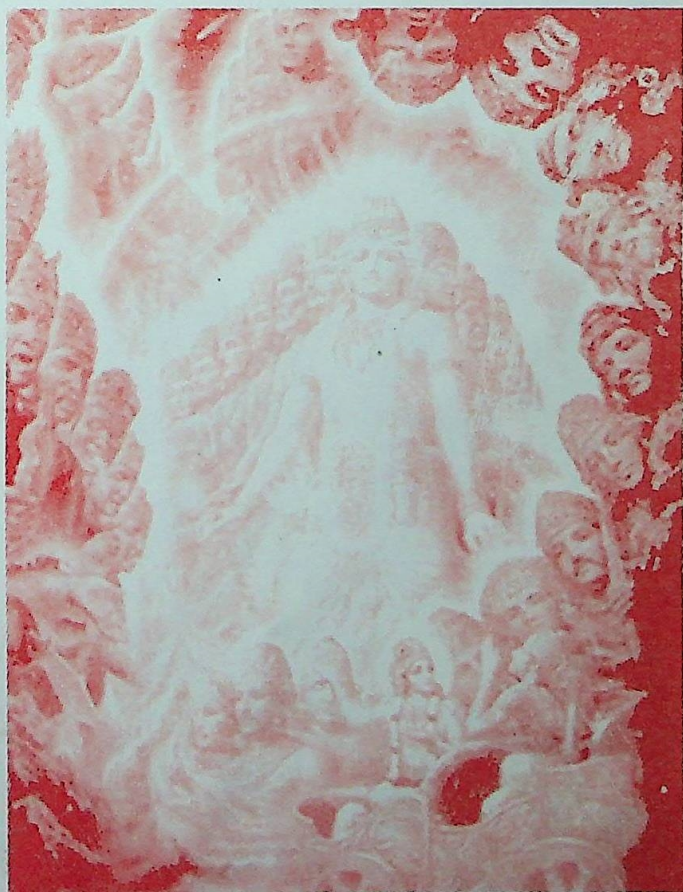




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# **STORIES FROM SHRIMAD BHAGWADA**

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**NOIDA BOOK PUBLISHING**  
Noida, U. P.



## FOREWORD

It is said that sage Vyasa did not get soul satisfaction from all the scriptures he had created. Then, he wrote Shrimad Bhagwat to feel the divine satisfaction. The book illustrating the charming spectacles of Lord Krishna fulfilled the yearning of his soul.

It is the holy book of Vaishnavites, the faithfuls of Krishna incarnation of Lord Vishnu. It holds devotion to be the sublime route to the grace of Krishna. The depicted episodes are a sweet amalgum of the mythological mysticism, romance, spiritual philosophy and devotion. The faithfuls of this sect accord it higher place even than Vedas. According to them, this mythological epic contains the miracles and spectacles worked out by the living romantic aspect of God and the counterpart aspect represented by Radha.

In this book, sublime stories from Bhagwat are presented in simple language and format. The divine message contained therein can be easily understood by the children and any common man. Our aim is to catch the imagination of the children to inspire them to read the original book. Once they taste the honey of the real devotion, all the other tastes will feel tasteless.

We hope that our effort will kindle the candle of love for romantic Krishna in the hearts of the readers. Your response is welcome.

—*Publisher*



यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवती भारत ।  
अभ्युत्थानमर्धमस्य तदाऽऽत्मनः कुर्याम्यहम् ॥





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## 1

**DELIVERANCE FROM GHOST LIFE**

Once upon a time a religious brahmin named Atmadeva used to live in a town situated on the bank of Tungbhadra river in the southern region. He had a wife called 'Dundli'. She was as bad as good her husband was. He was a pious soul and she was evil through and through. Dundli was a shrew and a jealous woman. She never obeyed Atmadeva. It was perhaps because the husband had failed to sire any children. One day, they quarrelled bitterly. Fed up with life Atmadeva left home and walked towards the forest. Many unpleasant thoughts were troubling his mind. He had fasted, worshiped deities, gone on pilgrimages and made penances but got nothing. Life looked a meaningless exercise to him. The taunts of his wife and society had broken his heart. To him only honourable way out seemed to commit suicide.

That thought took him to a lake in the jungle. He was just making up his mind to jump into it to end his life when his conscience rebuked him. After all the scriptures said suicide was a grave sin, a cowardly act. One had no right to destroy the body gifted to one by Creator. So, he decided to use patience. Atmedeva sat down and watched the play of waves on the water surface. Then, a sage arrived there. Atmadeva made obeisance to him.

The sage blessed him and looked deeply at his face. "What is the matter, son? You look sad."







"Holy sir, I am fed up with this unfulfilled life. I had come here to end my life," confessed Atmadeva.

"Suicide is a sin, son," the sage announced. "You tell me your exact problem. I will see if I can be of any help."

"Sage, it is a sad tale. Even after long years of marriage I failed to beget a child. The people taunt me by calling me 'Seedless man' or 'Noman'," the sad man revealed.

"Hmm....! Show me your right hand. Let us see what your lines say."

The brahmin extended his right hand towards the sage. The sage studied his lines on the palm. After a careful study he announced, "You are not fated to beget a child, dear man. So, take it as your destiny and invest your remaining years in the service of Lord."

The man shuddered and spoke, "O sage! I hear that true sages make impossible happen. The words issued by their tongue are powerful enough to change the fate. Holy sir, is there some way I can get across this curse and become a father?"

The sage was moved at the pitiable state of the man. Taking pity on him the sage took out a divine fruit from his bag and gave it to Atmadeva saying, "If begetting a child is so important for you then take this fruit. Give it to your wife and God willing you shall become a parent."

The man gratefully touched the feet of the sage and returned home in ecstatic mood. He gave the fruit to his wife saying, "Dear, eat it. It is the blessing of a true sage. Soon you will certainly become a mother."

Dundli took the fruit and assured that she would eat it after washing herself for clean and pious feel.

After the exit of her husband, Dundli decided to ask her



sister how much pain was involved in giving birth to a child. The sister had come on a visit to her. Dundli confided to her sister, "Dear, my husband has given me a divine fruit to beget me a child. I want to know how much pain a woman suffers in delivering a child?"

"Don't ask, sister," the sister revealed, "It is terrible. You would wish you were dead. It is a new life if you manage to survive." She shuddered.

"Oh! I better not eat the bloody fruit," Dundli said looking terrified, "Pain frightens me. Even a headache makes me cry. Labour pain will turn me into a shrivelled old woman."

"I know. You always were too tender for pains," the sister was enjoying the game of playing on her fears. "Imagine! If giving birth to a child turns you into an old woman your husband would lose interest in you. Then he shall run after other women. What would you do?"

"So, what should I do with the fruit? Throw it away!"

"Why throw it? Feed it to your cow. Put it to some good use. Tell your husband you ate it," the sister advised.

"But if after due time, I don't bear any child, then how shall I explain?" Dundli spoke doubtfully.

"I will tell you what!" the sister spoke conspiringly and whispered, "I am pregnant of one month. When the child is born I will pass it on to you. We will set up the act."

"Set up the act? How??"

"Silly! You shall wrap some clothes on your belly to show the pregnancy bulge in progressive stages. I will pass on my child to you as soon as it is born and we will announce it was born to you."

Dundli agreed to act out the plot. On the same day, she fed the fruit to her cow. Her sister took up a room near her



house and started living there holed up. In due course of time she gave birth to a son and passed it on to her sister. Dundli at once removed her belly wrap-ups and told her husband, Atmadeva that she had born the son. The husband squealed in delight.

He gave doles to the poor and the brahmins to celebrate the arrival of the son. He even gave a grand feast to entire village. Atmadeva named his son 'Dundukari'. A few days later the cow gave birth to a strange calf. It had bovine ears but rest of the body was human. Atmadeva named it 'Gokarna'. He began to bring up that creature also as his own child.

Meanwhile, the sister of Dundli would sneak in a few times a day to suckle the child. Dundukari became a spoilt child as he grew up. Too much indulgence of the parents had turned him into an adamant kid who threw tantrums at slightest pretext. He would beat up the smaller kids or let loose the cattle of unwary people. If some came to complain, Dundli would pay the damages but would not admonish Dundukari.

On the other hand Gokarna was an obedient child. He would go to the school regularly and study hard to gain knowledge. The teachers admired him. And back home he would serve Atmadeva like a caring son. But Dundli was not impressed. She would rebuke Gokarna for nothing and the boy bore it with a smile.

The degeneration of Dundukari continued. And then, he became a professional thief and swindler. He visited whore houses too often. One day he demanded money from his mother. When she refused to oblige, the bad boy beat her to death. He showed no remorse.



That evening, Atmadeva and Gokarna sat down to discuss the matter. At last Atmadeva said, "Son Gokarna! I am a broken man and don't feel like staying in this house. I wish to go to the forest and make penance."

"I too want to go, father. To some holy place I shall go to purify myself. I may gain spiritual knowledge if I come across some accomplished guru. On the way I will leave you at the forest."

So they did. The two left home and Gokarna left Atmadeva near a forest before moving on. He headed for Kashi, the holy city of learning.

Left alone, Dundukari was now free to indulge in all vices. Whatever money he found in the house went to prostitutes and gambling. Soon he ran out of money. The prostitutes turned away and he was no more welcome in their dens. Feeling hurt, Dundukari asked of the prostitutes, "What is the matter? Earlier you used to fawn and fuss over me. Lately you behave as if I were a stranger. Is it because I have no money now?"

"You are right, Dundukari," the prostitutes said, "We have no use for a man who has no money. It is the principle of our profession. We don't recognise any face. The money in the pocket is only what matters to us. Don't come here. If you manage to become rich, you will again be welcome."

Dundukari pondered over the situation. To raise money he turned a thief and began to steal money or trick people. The stolen money he spent on whores. One day, he brought five prostitutes home for free sexual indulgence. The prostitutes got him drunk and out of his senses.

Then, they talked. "This man is becoming a pain for us. Now he is stealing money. If he gets caught and spills his



beans we can be in big trouble for being recipients of crime money. We must get rid of him before he ruins us," one said.

Other one spoke, "He needs to be eliminated. He lies here out of his senses. We can easily strangle him to death. We shall dispose off the body by burying it in the courtyard. No one will ever know about it."

They all agreed to the suggestion. Dundukari got strangled to death and buried deep in the courtyard. Then the whores slipped away with the valuables of the house. They spread rumour that Dundukari had gone to some holy place to make penance for his sins as he had decided to redeem himself. There was no near and dear one there to worry about Dundukari.

Infact, his disappearance came as a big relief to his neighbours who were fed up with the shameless ways of the renegade man.

Meanwhile, after death Dundukari became a horrific ghost, a spectre that haunted the house. At night terrific sounds echoed through the dark house.

After some time, Gokarna returned from Kashi having completed his religious education. At night, he saw a spectre flitting through darkness making grotesque sounds. Sometimes it bayed like a dog or grunted like a pig or made frightening sounds like a dying animal does.

Gokarna sat up in his bed and tried to see in the darkness. He saw a dim shadow of a horrific spectre sitting some distance away. It was staring at Gokarna, From his holy bowl he poured sacred water on his palm and read a mantra before spraying it towards the spectre. The spectre appeared to get some relief. Gokarna asked, "Brother, who are you



and why do you suffer this ghostly fate?"

The spectre revealed the truth and prayed, "O my noble brother! Please deliver me from this horrible state. I am woe....misery. My soul is unfulfilled. I can't carry on."

Gokarna consoled it, "Brother, don't worry any more. I will go to holy Gaya tomorrow itself and perform all the posthumous rites that redeem souls. You shall be delivered."

He kept his promise and at Gaya he performed all the *Shraddha* rites for the deliverance of the soul of Dundukari. Upon his return he was pained to see Dundukari still suffering as a spectre.

He said, "Brother, I performed all the posthumous rites ordered by holy scriptures. So, why did you not get delivered? I am puzzled."

"I am a grave sinner," the spectre spoke, "Brother, the ordinary rites are not enough for my redemption. You must do something special, I don't know what. Save me, brother."

The next day, Gokarna consulted several priests and religious pundits about the deliverance of poor Dundukari.

The pundits said, "You must make penance to propitiate Lord Surya. He may inspire you to think of a way out."

Gokarna began to make penance without losing any time. Surya got duly propitiated and appeared to him, "Pleased am I with your penance, son Spell out your wish!"

"Lord! I only want to know how the soul of my brother Dundukari can be delivered from the fate of a spectre he now suffers," Gokarna prayed.

"There is only one way," Surya revealed, "Some pious devotee of Lord must recite *Shrimad Bhagwat* to the spectre of your brother and it must hear the recital peacefully for seven days. That will deliver him from the state of the



spectre.”

“Lord, I will myself recite the *Katha* to it but it is merely a spectre. It can't sit before me like an ordinary human in flesh.”

Surya spoke, “At the venue of the recital, plant a bamboo pole having seven joints. The spectre will deposit itself on the top joint. As the recital will progress the joints will crack up one by one. When the bottom joint cracks it will signify that the soul has been delivered from the spectre state.”

Gokarna did likewise and organised the *Katha* recital. The spectre sat atop the top joint. The joints went on cracking up. On the seventh day of conclusion, the seventh joint burst and out came Dundukari in the form of a divine man. Just then, a celestial craft arrived from the heaven and Dundukari was put on it by divine attendants and the party flew up heavenwards. Any one who hears the recital of Shrimad Bhagwat *Katha* with true devotion he gains a place in heaven.



## 2

**GLORY OF THE NAME 'NARAYANA'**

The father of Ajamil was a religious person. He used to worship Lord Vishnu, Agni and Surya everyday. Until the teenages he remained an obedient son of his parents but when he entered the romantic age of puberty an incident changed the course of his life. He went on bad ways.

One day, he was returning with flowers and fruit for the worship exercise of his father according to his command. On the way, he ran into a Bheel tribal and a beautiful girl who were coming from opposite direction. The girl cast a glance at Ajamil and fell for his beauty. She could not help explaining—

“Wow! What a handsome youngman! I wish I could have him for my husband!!”

It angered her Bheel companion who rebuked, “Shut up! Can't you see who this boy is? He is son of a strict Vedic brahmin. Ajamil is his name.”

“Whoever he may be. I have lost my heart to him. And I will get him whatever it takes,” the girl said.

“Alright then,” the Bheel hissed, “you can go to hell! Or break your head against the wall.” He moved away.

The beauty stood in the way of Ajamil.

“Dear boy! I have chosen you as my husband. Make me your wife. I promise you that I will make you the happiest man of the world.”

Ajamil stared at the girl as he was getting bewitched by







her beauty. His heart pounded. He tossed away the pooja flowers and fruit. With the girl he went to his father who was getting very annoyed at the delay at not getting flowers and fruit. Seeing Ajamil come empty handed with a girl made him explode, "Where are my pooja flowers and who is this wench?"

"She is my wife, father. We got secretly married at the temple," Ajamil spoke without any trace of shame or remorse.

The impudence of the son shocked the religious father. He screamed, "This woman is no good. She is a trollop. You are a brahmin boy, Ajamil. You must mind your dignity."

"What dignity? I have done nothing wrong. It is call of my heart. And it is my life. I will live it the way I choose," Ajamil barked.

Now the father could not control his anger. He rose up from his worship seat and moved to give a thrashing to the rebellious son. But before he could do that Ajamil assaulted his father by grabbing his hair and pulling him down to the floor. He roared, "Listen, you old wretch! I am the master of this house from this moment. What I say will hold good. If you don't like it you may go and get lost."

Humiliated and beaten up the old man left the place. Ajamil entered the house with that lustful woman.

"Good that the old dog is gone! Now we can do whatever we wish. Why dear, I did the right thing, didn't I?" Ajamil pulled the girl in close embrace and caressed her back.

"Correct thing you did, my dear. We can enjoy life now. All the naughty things we can do," the woman said in husky voice.

The two now indulged in shameless carnal pleasures. In no time all the money was gone. Ajamil began to steal money.



He had started to gamble as well as drinking. Thus, they lived life full of sins and vices.

The woman produced ten sons. The youngest of them was named 'Narayana'. Ajamil loved this son dearly.

At the old age of 88 Ajamil seriously fell ill. His time was up. Two agents of the god of death arrived to take his soul. One of them said, "Ajamil! You are marked for burning hell. Too many sins you have committed. You now have to take the punishment."

The sight of the agents of death frightened Ajamil.

He called out to his darling son, "Narayana! O my Narayana!! Please save me from these agents of death!"

The pitiable cry of help of Ajamil reached ears of Narayana (Lord Vishnu) who lay reclining on the Shesha bed. He called two of his divine attendants and spoke, "Go to the earth. One of my devotees appears to be in the trouble since he is calling my name. Get him out of trouble."

"As you command, O Lord," said the attendants and departed on their mission. They reached the spot just as the agents of death were about to seize the soul of Ajamil. The frightened Ajamil was screaming "Narayana! Narayana!!"

The attendants spoke to the agent, "Stop! You can't take him to the hell." The agents stopped in their act and explained, "Attendants! Our lord has ordered us to fetch his soul. He is an evil man. If we return empty handed our lord will get angry at us."

"You are right in your own way, agents. But we too have the orders of our Lord, Vishnu to get this man out of trouble," the attendants said.

"This man is evil through and through. Every sin he



committed and all vices he indulged in. He has been condemned to suffer in burning hell. The fact is that he was calling to his son 'Narayana'. He was not invoking Lord Vishnu," the agents revealed.

"Whatever he may have done in his life time, he spelled Lord's name 'Narayana' from his lips. That earns him a place in the highest heaven."

"Alright then, what can we do? Lord Vishnu is above all and so is his wish." The agents of death returned.

The god of death, Yamaraja asked why they had not brought the evil soul. The agents explained the situation. Yamaraja said, "We must obey if it is the wish of Lord Vishnu. Go back after a year and bring his soul."

Thus, Ajamil had earned one year as grace period for invoking Lord's name unwittingly. Now he was struck by the fear of hell. Good sense in him had awoken. He decided to invest entire one year of extended life in thoughts of the Lord to redeem himself.

He was now a changed man. On the bank of holy Ganga he lived in a pious hut and chanted the name of 'Narayana' and attended discourses of holy saints.

One year hence, the agents of death again appeared to take away his soul. But upon finding the attendants of Narayana on guard they fled.

Thus, the name of 'Narayana' saved a grave sinner from the hell and he went to the highest heaven after death. One must always remember the name of God, the redeemer of all.



## 3

## THE SKELETON DONATION

Once the celestial Lord, Indra was in egoful mood when he behaved impudently with Guru Brihaspati. The latter felt slighted and went away to his ashram from the celestial capital. Later, Indra realised his folly and repented. The celestial world was safe from the hostility of demonic forces only because of the presence of Brihaspati and his sagacity.

Indra went to the ashram of the guru to apologize. He made obeisance and spoke, "Guru sir! I have committed a grave error. I seek your forgiveness for the insolent words spoken by me for you. For our benefit please return to the celestial capital. All of us gods...." But before Indra could finish his sentence the celestial guru had vanished through his divine powers.

It meant he was not in a forgiving mood.

When the guru of demons heard the news about the estrangement between Indra and Brihaspati and the departure of the latter from the celestial capital, he said, "Demons! This is the time to capture heavens. In the absence of Brihaspati gods are only half as powerful as before. You can easily overpower them."

The demons raided the celestial capital Amravati as advised by Guru Shukracharya. The fighting broke out and the weakened gods were on the run in no time. Indra fled and went to Brahma to seek help.

He prayed to the lord, "Holy Father! Protect the gods.







The demons have invaded Amravati and are on the rampage. My gods are being destroyed. I saved my life somehow and come to seek protection."

Brahma had already heard about the departure of Guru Brihaspati. He spoke, "It is all because of your arrogance, Indra. You may pray to him to return to the heavens. Only he can suggest a way to beat the demons."

"I had sought him out to apologise, O Holy father. But he vanished just as I was praying to him."

"He is angry with you, Indra," Brahma spoke and added, "You must find ways to propitiate him. Or he won't ever come back to you. That is your problem."

"What can I do, Father? I don't know where he has withdrawn to. It will take time to trace him out. And meanwhile, the demons would destroy our capital."

Brahma closed his eyes and lost himself in some thoughts. Then, he opened his eyes and spoke, "Indra! In the entire world there is only one person who can be of some help to you. And he is Vishwaroopa, the learned son of Sage Twashta. You may appoint him your celestial priest. He will get you out of trouble."

Accordingly, Lord Indra went to sage Vishwaroopa who had three faces. With one he used to sip the juice of Somavalli plant, with the other he drank wine and the third one was for partaking food. Indra made obeisance to him. The sage asked, "What brings you here, celestial lord? Are you in trouble?"

"I am, O sage. We are being tormented by demons. My capital is under siege. The demons are wreaking havoc. It is very bad," Indra bleated.

The sage smiled. He spoke, "It is an old story between



demons and gods, Indra. Fratricide it is. Both are children of sage Kashyapa and try to gain upper hand over each other. What can I do in this sibling rivalry?"

"The gods need you, sage. At this hour you are our only hope who can banish our fears."

Thus, in many ways Indra pleaded with the sage, Vishwaroopa. The sage at last took pity on him. He agreed to become the priest of the celestial lords. He said, "Seeing the plight of the gods I accept to become the priest to conduct yajna for your welfare. You must remember that, Indra."

The sage gave Indra a divine armour saying, "Take this. Wear it while facing the demons in battle. It will protect you against them and earn you a victory."

With the divine armour Indra returned to Amravati. His return rallied the gods. They regrouped and launched themselves against the demons. The battle raged again. This time Indra was fighting like an invisible force. The demons could not hold their ground and fled in defeat.

The gods had earned splendid victory.

After the victory Indra returned to Vishwaroopa to express his gratitude. He spoke, "O sage! By your grace we have defeated the demons. Now I want to conduct a yajna that may free the celestial world of the danger of the demonic menace forever. You have already give me the word that you will conduct the yajna as celestial priest. Please come with me."

The sage accompanied Indra to Amravati. The yajna duly began. He began to offer oblations to the holy fire. A demon came there stealthily and sat down near Vishwaroopa in the guise of a brahmin. He whishpered into the ears of the Vishwaroopa, "Sage! On behalf of the gods you conduct this



yajna aimed at the destruction of the demons which is not fair."

"Why is it not fair?"

"It is unfair because gods and demons are the offsprings of the same father. You forget that your own mother come from a demon family. Do you wish all those on your mother's side destroyed? Think."

Vishwaroopa got the message. While offering oblations he invoked the names of demons along with those of gods.

The yajna was concluded but the gods gained no credit of it and did not feel empowered. Lord Indra spoke to sage Vishwaroopa, "We organised such a grand yajna but gained no power and no credits. We are just the same as we were before. What is the reason?"

Just then, a spy came to Indra and revealed, "Lord, yajna was not supposed to gain us anything. The sage offered equal oblations to the names of the demons as well. So, the gods and the demons got equal credits."

The revelation made Indira very angry. In a raging fury he drew out his sword and pounce upon the sage screaming. "Impostor sage! You have betrayed the gods. The gods organised the yajna and you offered oblations in the name of demons of your mother's side. I will not let you remain alive!" Indira cut off all the three heads of the sage in one blow.

Indra was condemned for killing a brahmin at the holy venue of yajna. All the gods and priests castigated him for his dastardly act. They screamed, "Indra! You are a murderer, murderer of a holy priest! You are unfit to remain on the throne of the heaven. You should better drown yourself in some well or river." The rebuke, taunts and condemnations



tormented Indra. When sage Twashta learnt about the fate of his son, he lost his temper. He roared in raging fury, "How dare you murder my son and still continue to defile the throne of heavens? I will destroy you. You will pay the price for killing my son."

Twashta sat down to perform a yajna right away. At the culmination of the yajna, from the holy fire a mountainous demon materialised. He had a big mace in one hand and conchshell in another. He bowed down to the sage. The sage named the demon 'Vritasura'.

"Command, master sage!" the demon spoke.

"Vritasura! You shall at once go to Amravati and destroy all the gods including that despicable Indra!" The sage commanded shaking in fury. The mighty demon flashed towards Amravati.

There, the mighty Vritasura wreaked havoc on gods. Whoever came in his way was squished to death. The gods ran helter and skelter for their lives. At last, Indra arrived on the scene atop his elephant Eravat to confront the demon and used his thunderbolt at him. The thunderbolt did no damage. The demon took away Indra's thunderbolt and threw it away. Then, Indra used fire weapons. They also proved ineffective. The demon snatched away Indra's bow and broke it like a twig. Vritasura now opened his cavernous mouth and ran to swallow Indra. It frightened the celestial Lord and he fled after jumping off the elephant back. Vritasura guffawed grotesquely that echoed through the heavenly worlds.

Indra went to the domain of Lord Vishnu.

"Protect us, O Lord! Save the gods!!" he prayed to the lord in meek voice. Vritasura is tormenting us to death or



the entire race of gods will disappear.”

Vishnu looked scornfully at him and rebuked, “Indra! A priest conducting yajna at your own plea and for your own good was beheaded by you at the very holy yajna venue. What a shame! Fie on you!!” You have brought disrepute to entire race of gods. Your sin is unpardonable. What punishment the sage Twashta metes out to you is what you richly deserve. You earned it.”

“I am very sorry for my petulant act, O Lord! I was blinded by anger at that time. Forgive me, my gracious Lord and deliver me from that horror of a demon.” Indra was in tears.

After a silence, Lord spoke, “This time even Lord Shiva or Brahma or I can’t help you. Only one person may be able to help you.”

“What person, my Lord?”

“Sage Dadheechi!” Vishnu revealed. “Only he can help you. You may go his ashram and propitiate him. Get his skeletal bones. Prepare Vajra weapon out of them and it will help you gain victory over the demon Vritasura.”

So, Indra went to the ashram of sage Dadheechi. The sage was in meditation then. Kamadhenu cow stood by his side. Indra waited for the sage to come out of his meditational trance. When the sage opened his eyes he found Indra in front of him with his hands folded.

The sage asked, “Indra! Why do you descend on this mortal world? Is everything alright in your celestial domain?”

“Nothing is right there, O sage,” Indra cried. We have fallen on bad days. For fear of Vritasura demon we hide in forests and caves away from our capital.”

He narrated entire tale to the sage. Dadheechi said, “That



is very tragic, Indra. So, what is the way out for you?"

"Holy sir, I had gone to Lord Vishnu," Indra revealed adding, "He said if you donate your bones to us to enable us to make a weapon out of them the demon could be killed. O sage, for the sake of the good of the gods kindly donate us your bones."

The sage closed his eyes and spoke, "If my bones serve any purpose of gods and humans I will gladly donate my entire skeleton."

Then, sage applied holy ointment on his body and sat in meditation. Kamadhenu began to lick his body. In a short time the flesh, skin and liquids of his body separated from his skeleton. Now there stood only the white skeleton of the sage, shining in the light.

Indra, made obeisance to the skeleton. He collected the bones and made a vajra called 'Tejwan' out of them. With that vajra (bolt) he challenged the demon Vritasura. A bitter duel broke out between the two. Using Tejwan bolt Indira felled the demon and the gods were delivered from his menace.



## 4

**CHURNING OF THE SEA**

The curse of sage Durvasa destroyed the glory of the celestial gods. The demon forces easily gained ascendance over gods and tyrannized them. Enfeebled gods went to the domain of Lord Vishnu. They prayed, "O Lord! Take pity on us and protect us from the torments of the demons." The lord suggested, "You may churn the sea with the cooperation of the demons. The exercise will yield you gems from the sea and you will again gain your lost glory and power."

"We are ready, O Lord." gods said and doubtfully added, "but will the demonic forces cooperate with us?"

Lord spoke, "You may go to the demon king, Bali. Remind him that you gods and the demonics are siblings, the children of the same sire. Bali is a very emotional person, I am sure he will accept to team up with the gods for the operation."

The celestial lord, Indra followed the advice and went to Bali. Bali received him with brotherly affection and got Indra beseated. He asked Indra the purpose of his visit. Indra spoke, "Brother Bali! We are the sons of the same father, sage Kashyapa. We may sometimes quarrel but the siblings we remain. Why shouldn't we give up antagonisms and live peacefully like a loving family."

"That is a very noble idea." Bali agreed. "But is it possible?"

"Nothing is impossible, brother, if we really want it. We must be sincere about it." Indra spoke.







"I will be sincere, Indra" Bali promised. But your side must not try to usurp our rights and avoid any kind of provocative acts. We won't have any illwill against you."

"Lord Vishnu says that if we gods and demons churn the sea working as two teams we can reap a harvest of invaluable gems that lie buried in the bed of sea. They will prove blessings to all the earth creatures. We shall share the yield equally between us," Indra said sweetly.

"I see no problem in that. We can work together to get those riches," King Bali enthusiastically said.

Bali got his ministers and advisors consider the issue at once. They met and gave the verdict in the favour of participation. Bali said, "Indra! We have decided to join the exercise of sea churning with gods. Now what shall we use as churner?"

"Mandrachala mountain can serve as the giant churner."

"What about the churning rope?" Bali asked.

"King Vasuki of serpents has agreed to serve as a rope. I will speak to Lord Vishnu about the base we shall put the churner on."

"So, it is final then?" Bali asked.

Indra nodded his head in agreement.

Then first of all, the gods and demons lifted up the Mandrachala mountain to move it to the south shore. In this effort several of them got crushed under it. The exercise did not last long. The heavy load of the mountain was making them all huff and puff and flop down. They could not take the punishment. Indra ran to Lord Vishnu again to pray for help, "Lord! Many gods and demons have lost lives by getting crushed under Mandrachala. We can't move it any further. Please help us out."



"Don't worry,' Lord assured, "I will get it to sea."

Lord arrived at the scene flown by his carrier Garuda. He lifted the mountain by his left hand and installed it into the sea after getting it there. But the mount did not remain in stable state. It began to sink down and down as the gods and the demons watched in worry.

Lord spoke, "Alright, I will stabilize it on my back in the form of a giant turtle I am going to take."

Using his divine maya, Lord transformed into a gigantic turtle and dived underneath the sinking Mandrachala to hold it on his back. Vasuki coiled himself around the mountain and the churning process began. The gods pulled from the tail side and the demons from the head side.

The friction of the churning exercise heated up Vasuki's body and he began to exhale storms of venom fume laden breath which darkened the skins of the demons. Gods were spared as they were on the safe tail side.

The churning, first of all yielded Kalkoot, a poison of deadliest kind. No one would accept it. The gods and demons both shirked away. Lord Shiva came forward and bottled the poison in his adam's apple to save the world as it could have destroyed everything. It turned his apple blue and he came to be known as *Neelkantha*.

Next to come out was Kamadhenu cow. It was donated to forest dwelling sages and brahims at the suggestion of Vishnu. Thus, the sages were blessed with the wish granting divine cow.

Then, the sea yield Uchheshrava horse. King Bali liked it and took possession of the equine gem.

Eravat elephant with four tusks was the fourth blessing to come out. Indra kept the elephant. The fifth yield was



'Kaustubh' gem which was claimed by Vishnu as his share for helping the churning exercise.

Then, a wish yielding tree called Parijat was gained. It was planted on the sea shore for the general good of all. Later, the gods whisked it away to the heaven. The seventh yield was a beauty called Rambha. She decided to live in heaven as a free person.

The goddess of prosperity, Laxmi was the next to emerge out of sea. The gods and demons both wanted to have her.

"We want her!" both sides cried.

"Such a glorious beauty can only fit in the heavenly surroundings. She must come with us," said the gods.

Both sides made claims and counter claims. Lord Vishnu calmed them down and spoke, "Gods and demons! You had promised not to pick up quarrels against each other. To avoid any bad feeling between you it would be better to leave the decision to Laxmi herself."

Laxmi chose none of them. She decided to live with Vishnu as his better half. Then, the sea yielded goddess Varuni (Wine) who was gladly accepted by demons. At the end, divine medicine man Dhanvantari came out holding a grail of nectar in one hand. Both the sides gleefully eyed the grail of nectar. The demons said, "It is the real prize of our labour of churning the sea. We played the harder part. So, we shall partake it first.

A demon lunged forward and grabbed off the grail from the hand of Dhanvantari. Indra could not take it. He ran at the demon screaming, "You can't consume it all. We have also put in equal labour. Half of it rightfully belong to us."

"No!" The demons roared, "We shall partake it. You can have whatever gets left. Vishnu approached Indra and he



whispered into the the ears of latter, "Look, it would do you no good to fight against demons. They are in foul mood and may smash the pot down to waste all the nectar. Keep patience. I will think of something."

The demon who had snatched the grail suddenly ran away. Other demons followed him. In the mad rush the demons found no time to drink the nectar. Lord Vishnu again resorted to his maya. He transformed himself into a stunning beauty of a woman. All the gods and demons ogled at her with their eyes propping out. The beauty called Mohini (Bewitcher) stood between the demon and god mobs. She sweetly spoke, "O demons! Why do your quarrel over a little bit of that nectar? Give me the grail, and I will serve you all one by one in fair shares."

The demons and gods were so bewitched by the beauty of Mohini that they were ready to abide by anything she said. They at once agreed to her role of being a mediator-server. Mohini said to the demons and gods, "Folks! All of you must first clean yourself in the river. Then gods and demons will sit in two neat line ups to enable me to serve the nectar fairly, one by one."

After washing themselves the gods and the demons sat in two separate lines. Mohini raised the grail and spoke to demons, "The nectar in the upper part of this grail is thin. At the lower level it is thick and more powerful. Tell me, who should I serve first, you or gods?"

"Give the upper half to the gods, we will take the real thick lower part of the nectar," demons greedily said.

"Alright!" Mohini turned towards the gods, "I will give you the nectar first!"

Mohini began to serve the nectar to gods. A demon called



Rahu saw through the trick of Mohini. In the guise of a god he slipped into the god line and sat between Surya and Chandrama. After serving nectar to Surya, as Mohini moved forward, Chandrama recognised the impostor.

He warned, "Mohini! Don't give him nectar. He is some demon in disguise!"

Mohini stepped back but Rahu had already partaken some drops of nectar. Mohini fed the remaining nectar to Chandrama and smashed the grail down to earth. Then, he reverted to his real form.

Seeing Vishnu confronting him, Rahu fled in fright.

But not far he could go. Vishnu released his Chakra and Rahu got beheaded. Before he could cut him to finer pieces, Chandrama prayed, "Hold it O Lord! Do not cut him into more pieces. By partaking nectar he has already gained immortality. The cut up pieces will produce more Rahus and torment us. Vishnu nodded his head and recalled his Sudarshan Chakra. The two parts of Rahu now became Rahu and Ketu.

Lord Said to Rahu, "Look, by impostoring you sat in god line and partook the nectar. So, you are now a god. Give up the demonic ways. Now on you have the right to be worshiped like seven holy planets!"

Since then nine planets are worshiped.

Rahu-Ketu carry the grudge against Surya and Chandrama. It shows out in the form of sun and moon eclipses.

In some ancient scriptures it is said that son of Indra, Jayant had snatched the grail of nectar from the demon who had run away with it. Jayant had flown away with the grail and wherever he landed to take a breather it became



a holy centre. The places are Trayambakeshwara on the bank of river Godavari in Nasik district of Maharashtra, Mahakaleshwara on the Shipra river bank in Ujjain district of Madhya Pradesh, Prayaga in U.P. at the confluence of Ganga, Yamuna and Sarswati and Haridwar on the bank of Ganga. At all these places Kumbha fairs are held in every twelve years and Ardh Kumbha in every six years. Even to this day the tradition continues.



## 5

**GAJENDRA MOKSHA**

Once a gandharva called Hoohoo went on a pleasure excursion with some women in his aerial craft. At Ritumana garden on Trikoota hill, he landed his craft. In the garden lake, he began to play water sports with his women. Sage Durvasa happened to come upon that place. The beauty of the place inspired him to sit in meditation there. To take a dip before the meditation, he took off his clothes and descended into the water.

For gandharva women he became an object of fun.

They splashed water on one another saying, "Look at the sage! How funny his wet dripping beard looks!"

Another said, "His wet loin sticks to his thighs!"

"How about having fun with him?"

To please his women, Hoohoo dived and swam submerged towards the sage. He grabbed the feet of the sage who tried hard to free his feet but the gandharva pulled him down.

Hoohoo got him have a few deep dip-downs and released the feet. He surfaced near the sage and laughed at him merrily.

This impudence enraged the sage. Standing in the water he put a curse, "Rogue gandharva! You have played a dastardly joke on me. I curse you to become a crocodile and live on eating lowly water creatures."

The curse put Hoohoo in a quandary. Worried sick he prayed, "Forgive me, O sage. I have erred in offending you."







Those women turned my head to the mischief. I am ashamed of my act."

"My curse will work, evil man," the sage said. "You will pay for your dirty insolent mischief."

Hoo hoo begged and pleaded for mercy. Then, he began to weep. "I will go through the punishment, O sage. But tell me how the curse will get lifted?"

"Listen! When Lord Vishnu's Sudarshan Chakra touches you, my curse will get lifted and you will revert to your real self."

The curse came true. The gandharva turned into a crocodile and started living in the lake of a dense forest. In the same forest a leader of an elephant herd was also suffering a term of a curse. It was a king called Indradamana in his previous form who had failed to rise in honour of sage Agastya. The sage had cursed him into elephant life.

Once the elephant came upon that lake with his herd driven by thirst and wish for a swim and a bath. He descended into the waters and began splashing in the water.

Just then, the crocodile caught its leg in its mighty jaws. The elephant did its best to free its leg but did not succeed because the crocodile had its jaws clamped tight.

For a long time they struggled to get the better of each other. One moment the elephant would put the crocodile to the bank but the very next moment the latter would drag it back into the water.

Gradually the elephant was tiring out. The crocodile was gaining the upper hand. It pulled the elephant deep into the water.

The herd went away taking their leader as a lost cause. The elephant now was under water except its trunk



through which it breathed to stay alive.

At the last moment the elephant began to pray to Lord Vishnu, "O Lord! Please save my life. Save me from the crocodile."

Lord Vishnu heard his prayer lying on his Shesha-bed in his domain. He spoke to Laxmi, "Dear! A faithful of mine is in trouble on the earth. He is calling me for help. I must go to his rescue. I can't disappoint my faithful."

Lord flew to the spot on his carrier Garuda.

To protect his faithful, Lord Vishnu took out his ultimate weapon, Sudarshan Chakra and released it at the crocodile. It tore open the jaws of the crocodile. The leg of the elephant got freed. The touch of Chakra lifted off the the curse and the gandharva regained his own original form. He made obeisance to Lord.

The sight of the Lord lifted the curse off the elephant as well. In his king Indradamana form he fell at Lord's feet praying, "O Lord! I am freed of the curse by your grace. I will devote rest of my life in making penance.

Lord Vishnu blessed them both. Thus, the two cursed ones got redeemed and earned a place in the surperior heaven.

One who remembers Lord with true heart and mind he gets freed of transmigration and gains moksha after death.



## 6

## DURVASA APOLOGISES

Ambrish was a kind ruler and a religious person. His queen was also a pious lady of holy nature. The two faithfully observed all the religious duties and customs regularly. They used to fast on *Ekadashi* days and give away cows in donation the next day. To test the religious dutifulness of the king, once sage Durvasa arrived with his 88,000 disciples. The king warmly recieved the sage with due respect, "Welcome, O holy sir. Your visit is a honour for me. What can I do for you?"

The sage spoke, "I and my disciples come from a very long distance. We are hungry. Please feed us?"

"Sure holy sir. Please wash yourself. Meanwhile I will arrange for your food," the king said.

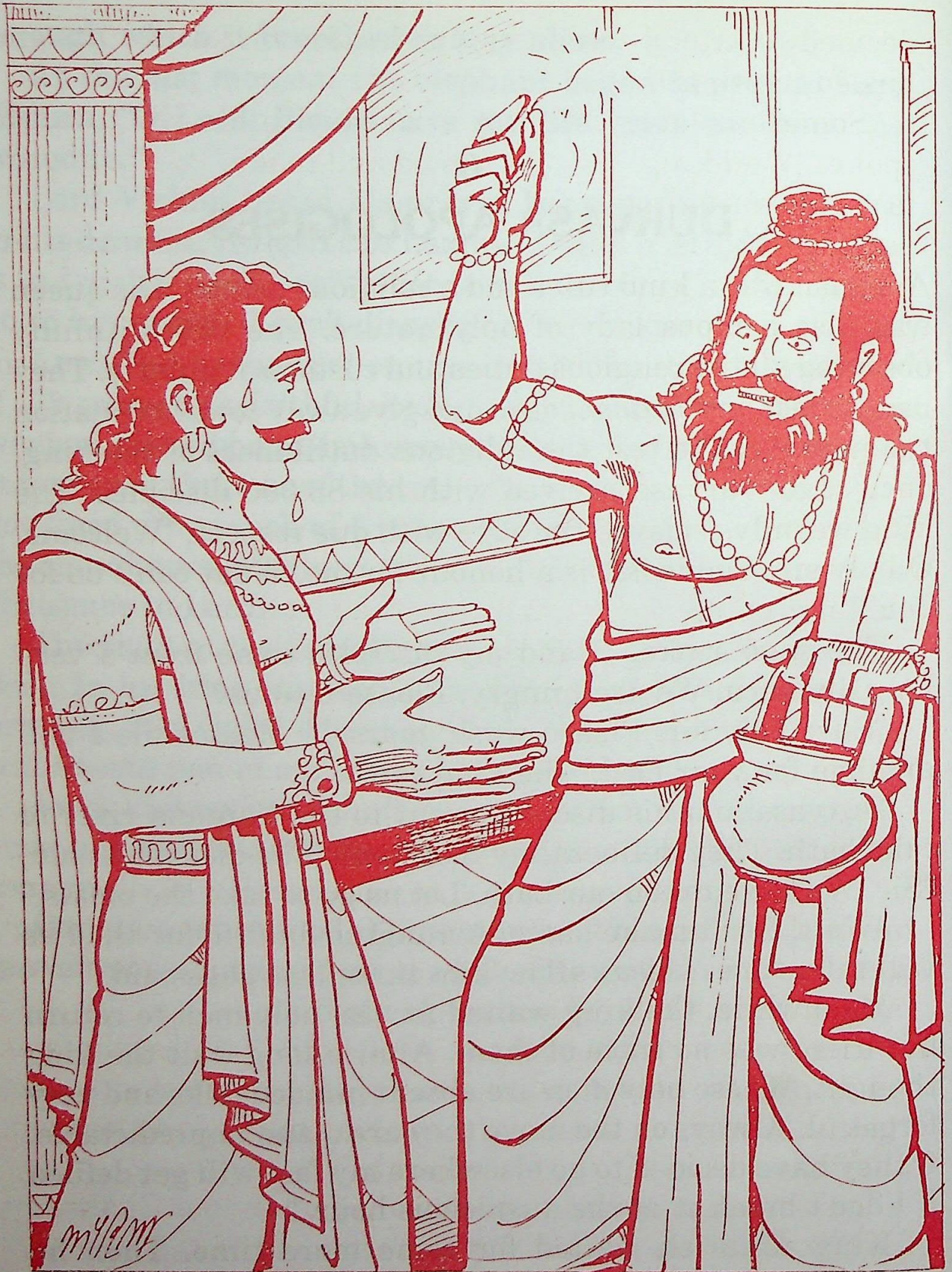
Durvasa and his disciples went to the Yamuna river to take bath. They deliberately took time. The disiciples said, "Sir, We have taken our bath. Let us go to take the meals."

"Wait! Don't make haste. Arranging for food for all of us will take time. Let us allow him time," the sage said.

Meanwhile, the king waited for the holy men to return but there was no trace of them. After a long wait the king thought, "These holy men are absent minded folks and very forgetful. Always on the move they are....and unpredictable. If they have decided to go elsewhere my fast will get defiled if I don't break it at the auspicious hour."

King Ambrish waited for some more time. Then he







decided to attend to his fast duties. He broke his fast and busied in other matters.

Sometime later, Durvasa arrived with his disciples. He spoke, "Well king, we are cleaned and ready. Please get the food laid out for us."

"The food is ready, holy sir, but I have committed an impropriety. I pray to be pardoned."

"What impropriety, king?"

"Sage! I waited for a long time. When you did not turn up I broke my fast as the auspicious hour was passing by. I thought you had gone to someone else to be his guests."

Sage Durvasa lost temper. He screamed, "Fool king! Your breaking fast has defiled the entire food."

"I have not eaten food in real sense, holy sir. Just a wee bit I put on my tongue to break the fast symbolically."

Durvasa roared, "Whatever amount! It does not matter. You have insulted us in a way. You ate food on hungry guests. You deserve punishment."

Durvasa pulled a hair off his matted bun and threw it to the ground. A grotesque figure of flames, called Kritya leapt up and moved at the king with jaws open to burn him down.

The king did not panic or lose patience. He sat down and invoked the name of Lord praying. "O Lord Almighty! Protect me. The angry sage is hell bent on punishing me for no fault of mine. Only you can save me from his ire."

His prayer reached the ears of Lord Vishnu who was resting on Sheshabed with Laxmi. He sat up and spoke, "Laxmi! One of my faithfuls is invoking me praying for help. I must go to his rescue to the earth."

Lord Vishnu got on Garuda with Sudarshan Chakra in his finger.



From the sky in the invisible form he saw the place of king Ambrish below and understood the situation. In defence of Ambrish he released the Chakra which at once destroyed the fire dragon Kritya. Then it turned, at sage Durvasa poised to behead him. The frightened sage fled from there but Chakra followed him in whatever direction he ran. Durvasa ran to Amravati and sought the protection of Indra saying, "O celestial Lord! Please save my life. Lord Vishnu's Sudarshan Chakra is after me to kill me."

Indra said, "I am helpless, O sage! I can not face the Sudarshan Chakra of Vishnu. I will advise you to go to Lord Brahma. He may have some answer."

Durvasa ran to the domain of Brahma and prayed to him with folded hands, "Holy father! Save me! Sudarshan Chakra of Vishnu is after my life. Protect me from it."

Brahma said, "Excuse me, sage Durvasa. It is not possible for me to work against Sudarshan Chakra of Vishnu. You must do the sensible thing and run to Lord Vishnu himself to seek protection. Only he can help you."

Durvasa ran to Vishnu domain and prayed, "Lord! Save my life. I am in you refuge."

Lord Vishnu said, "Sage! you have done a grave impropriety in acting against a pious soul like king Ambrish. It is a shame. You almost killed him by that fire dragon Kritya. My Sudarshan Charka saved his life in the nick of time. You can protect yourself by running to king Ambrish and seeking his forgiveness for your impetulent act. Otherwise my Chakra would keep hounding you till eternity. And you will find no protection anywhere."

Sad and shameful Durvasa was left with no option but to go to king Ambrish. He apologized to the king who forgave



him readily. To make the sage feel comfortable he sought pardon for breaking fast before feeding him. Then, Sudarshan Chakra returned to Lord Vishnu to the great relief of Durvasa and his disciples. That is the power of true devotion to Lord which makes Almighty come running to the rescue of his faithfuls.



## 7

**PUNISHMENT OF CURSE**

It was a little before mid day. In Baikuntha domain Lord Vishnu's chamber was manned by two guards named Jai and Vijay. Whoever came to see Lord he had to seek the permission of those two guards. Lord himself had instructed them not to allow anyone in without clearance from him.

Jai and Vijay were very strict about their duty. Many a time they had blocked the path of goddess Laxmi even. Once annoyed Laxmi had put a curse on them. But the two continued to be strictly dutiful as ever regardless.

Incidentally, once sage Sanakadi arrived to pay a visit to Lord in course of his cosmic travel. He was an accomplished sage and an ardent devotee of Lord. Wherever he went he held discourses to preach the true path and the evil of attachments or desires.

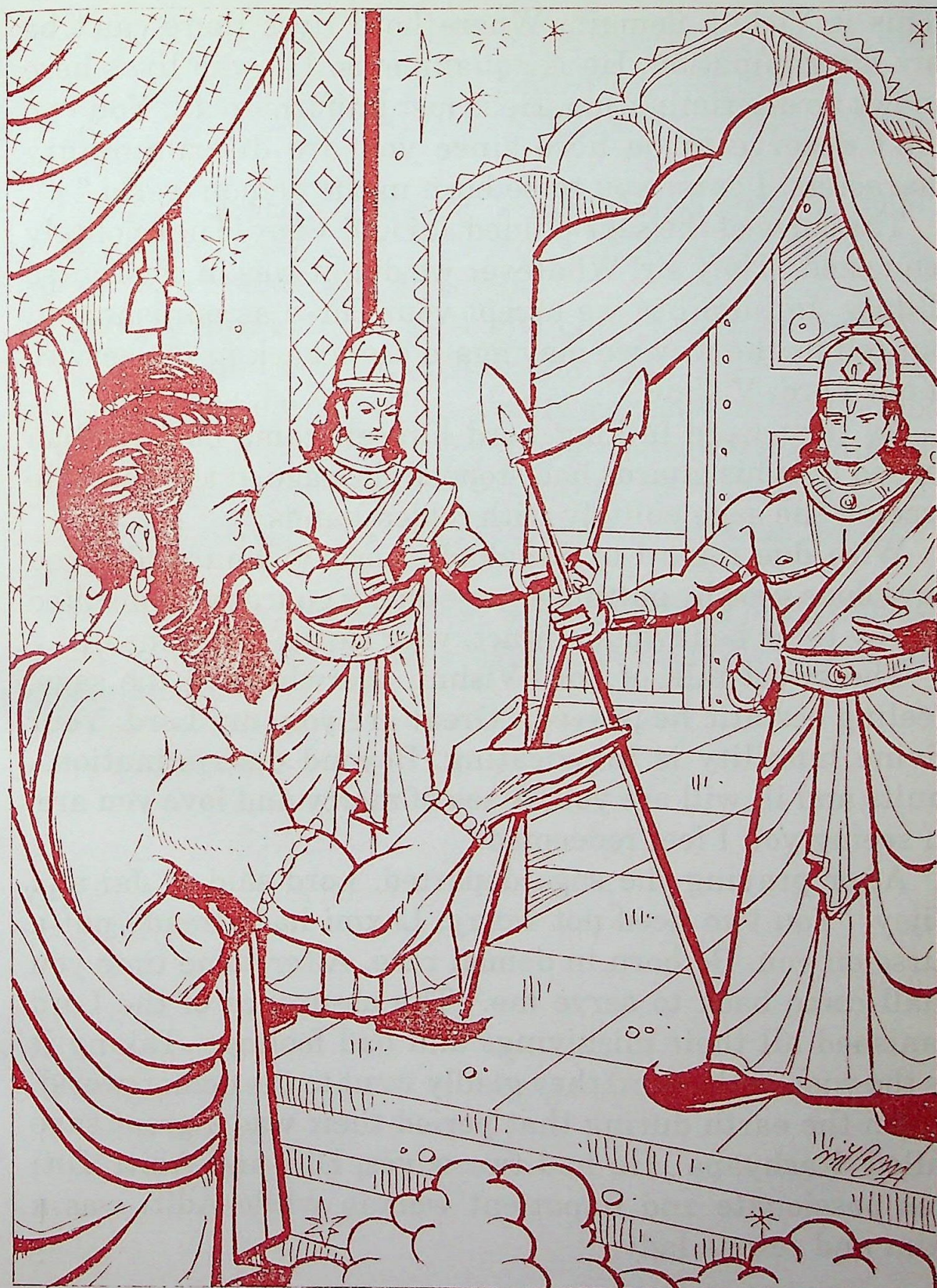
The sage crossed six doors and reached the seventh that led to Lord's chamber. At the door stood alert Jai and Vijay. They stopped him, "You can't go in, holy sir without the clearance of Lord."

The sage stopped and stared at the guards, "We are the faithful of Lord and his dear one. You can't stop me."

"Whoever you may be, holy sir. You can't go in. It is the order of Lord himself not to allow anyone in without his permission. Even goddess Laxmi is subject to this rule."

Although the guards were just doing their duty yet the sage felt he had been insulted. He was anguished. He spoke,







"This is Vishnu domain. Where Lord lives there can't be any discrimination. He is equanimous. He who lives here knows no discrimination. He is just uniform to all. You two don't deserve to be here since you are discriminatory characters. I curse you to be born in the demon world."

The curse of the sage pained Jai and Vijay. They politely requested, "Holy sir! Whatever we did, it was in the course of duty. In humility we accept your curse as punishment. But tell us the way we may again come back in the service of our Lord, Vishnu."

As they were talking Lord himself came out. He had sensed that his guards had stopped the sage at the door. He greeted the sage politely with folded hands.

With due regard to Sanakadi, Lord Vishnu said, "You have done good by putting a curse on my guards who insulted you by their behaviour. Intact, your insult is my insult."

The sweet talk of Lord Vishnu overwhelmed the sage. Feeling ecstatic he prayed, "Great are you, my Lord. Your divine humility is intoxicating. Beyond discriminations, faults and ill will are you. A sea of mercy and love you are. In seeing you I feel redeemed."

After praying the sage departed. Lord said to Jai and Vijay, "You two need not worry. Laxmi has already put a curse on you. Be born in demon race. After some time you shall come back to serve me." The assurance of the Lord banished all their misgivings and bad feelings. Taking it as the wish of the Lord they gladly went to the demon world.

On the earth during that period there was a great sage called 'Kashyapa'. He had two wives, Diti and Aditi. Diti was passionate and impatient woman while Aditi was a calm and serene lady.



It was an evening time. The sage was sitting on his grass mat for meditation. Then, Diti arrived there and passionately held his hand saying, "Dear man! I feel hot. Please satisfy me at once."

The sage had to yield but he said, "Diti, your passion will be satisfied but remember the child you produce due to this union will be of evil thoughts."

The prediction of the sage came true. Diti gave birth to twins who turned into demonic giants instantly. They came to be known as Hiranyaksha and Hiranyakashipu. Infact, they were the accursed Jai and Vijay, the former guards of Lord Vishnu. They later got killed at the hands of Lord himself and gained his domain to resume duties as his door guards.

This episode teaches us that while fulfilling one's duties one must be rational and give due consideration to propriety.



## 8

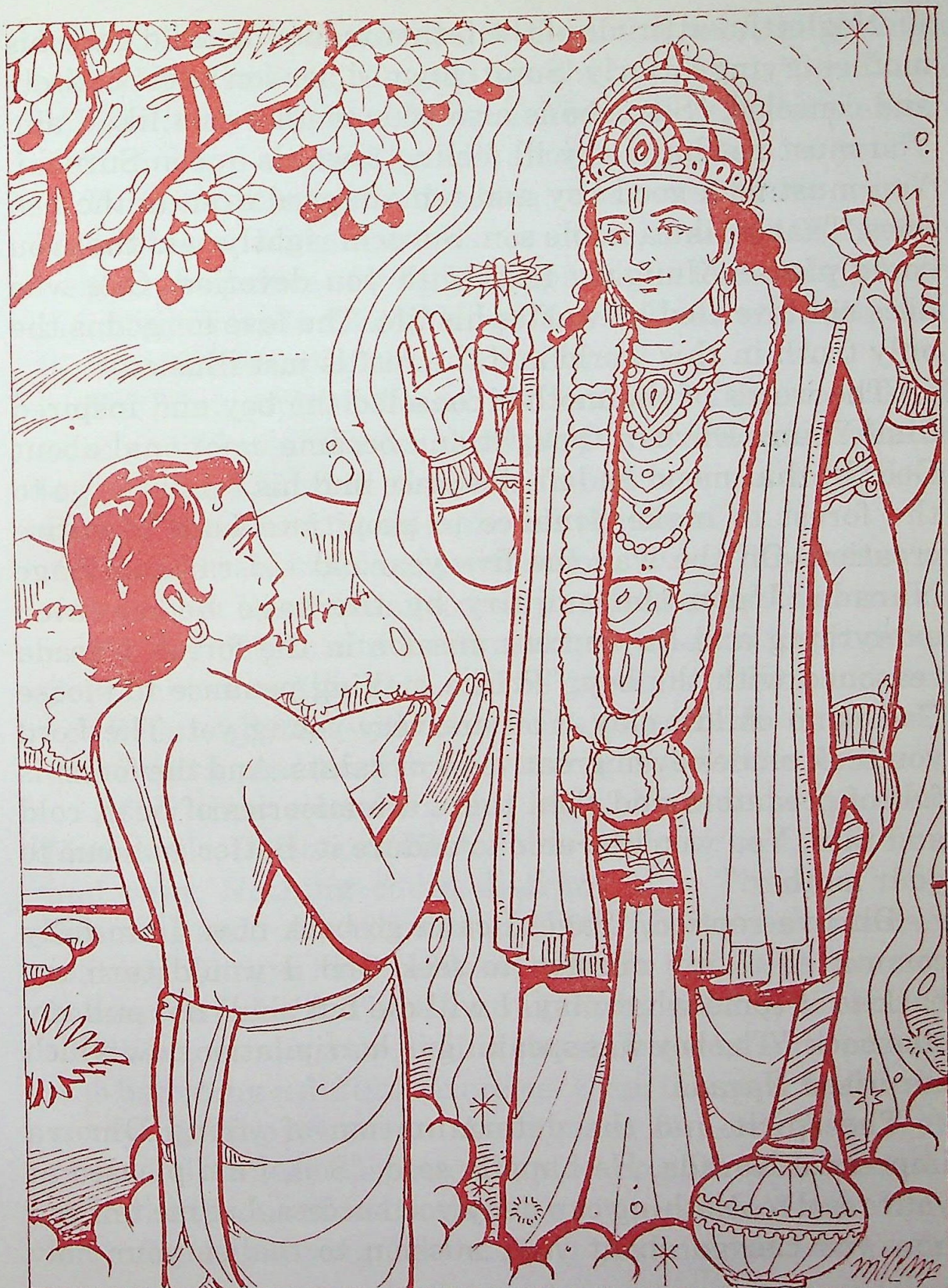
**STORY OF DEVOTED DHRUVA**

Manu's son Uttanpada had two queens named Suruchi and Suniti. The king was more interested lately in Suruchi who was younger in age. But the elder queen Suniti did not grudge it. She was a calm and dutiful woman who cared for higher values of life more. Generous and religious she was. The queens had a son each of almost the same age of 5-6 years. The son of Suruchi was named Uttama while Dhruva was born of Suniti. The king was partial to Uttama since he was the son of his favoured queen, Suruchi.

On that day, it was evening hour. Uttanpada was in the chamber of Suruchi. Uttama was playing in his lap. Incidentally Dhruva happened to come there. He was on exploration of the palace on demand of curiosity of a child. Seeing Uttama in the father's lap made him also desire to play in that lap. He tried to get into the lap but Suruchi pushed him away saying, "You can't sit in the lap of the king. If you wish to do so, You must make hard penance to please Lord to get booned to take rebirth out of my womb. Born of me you shall sit in the lap of the king as Uttama is."

The harsh words of step mother made little Dhruva cry. But the king did not try to intervene or say words of consolation. And he did not rebuke the queen for her partial behaviour. Too infatuated with pretty queen he was to retain his rationality.







Neglectful attitude of the father made the child go to his mother crying bitterly. Suniti hugged her son affectionately and consoled, "Son, she is also your mother just like I am. You must not have any ill feeling towards queen Suruchi. You must be a good boy and remain good even to the bad ones. That is like a noble son. Suruchi rightly said that you could please Almighty Lord with you devotion. One who does not love God he wastes his life. The love for god is the only truth in this world and the rest is just illusion."

The words of the mother consoled the boy and inspired him. Young Dhruva thought and became emotional about God. In that mood he left the place and his family to go to the forest to make penance to propitiate Lord of entire creation. On the way the five year old kid ran into Sage Narada. Upon the enquiry by the sage he revealed everything and his current mission in the forest. Narada reasoned with the boy, "Prince making penance to please God is no child's play. You are very young yet. The Lord you seek eludes even great yogis or saints. And the forest is full of predators and then there are miseries of heat, cold and rain. You won't be able to endure it. Better go home to your mother."

Dhruva replied, "Sage! I can't go back now. I am fully committed to my mission to seek God. I would turn my back to it come what may. I will die but shall not pull my step back." The boy was speaking in horripilation now which surprised Narada.

The spirit and the determination of young Dhruva impressed Narada. He happily said, "Son, I am pleased at your resolve. Nothing can deny you success. Let me tell you how you can go about your mission to realise your holy



dream. There is a sacred grove on the bank of Yamuna called 'Madhuban'. Go and sit there. Chant '*Om Namō Bhagwate Vasudevaya*' Mantra. You will gain the pleasure of Almighty Lord and he will shower his grace on you."

Thus encouraged by Narada, the boy Dhruva went to Madhuban and began to make penance. Meanwhile, Narada went to the palace of king Uttanpada. He found the king in sad mood. Narada asked, "King! You look sad and miserable. What is the cause of this? Do tell me."

The king replied, "Sage! My little son Dhruva has left us to go to forest. We could not stop him. I wonder what he is doing and in what shape he could be right now? Is he alive? This worry troubles me all the time?"

Narada said words of consolation, "King! You must not worry about Dhruva unnecessarily. He is a very determined young boy. Right now he is making penance to propitiate God. I am sure Almighty will be gracious to him and show up. Eventually he will come back to you. He is bound to make you a proud father and earn glory for the family."

After thus consoling the king, Narada went away. Meanwhile, Dhruva meditated through heat, cold, hail, storm and rain. Nothing could distract him. Thunder claps, lightning and roars of lions made little impression on penance making Dhruva. He held his breath and kept his mind beamed into Lord. The air around was getting frozen.

The creatures were feeling the suffocation and breathing was becoming a difficult exercise. Even the gods had started worrying. They went to the domain of Lord Vishnu and prayed. The gods suspected that young Dhruva wanted to gain the throne of Indra through his penance. Lord allayed their fears by saying, "Gods! Don't get anxious. Dhruva has



held his breath to beam his mind into me. I will soon appear to bless him. The air will again flow and everyone will be breathing easy." After so assuring the gods, Lord Vishnu got Garuda borne and flew to Dhruva.

Dhruva opened his eyes and found Lord standing in front of him exactly in the form he had visualised. Dhruva stood up and made his obeisance. He felt so ecstatic that his voice choked. He wished to say something or pray but was unable to do anything. The young devotee was in stupor.

Seeing his stunned state Lord touched the throat of the boy with his conchshell. It gave Dhruva back his voice. Dhruva at once began to sing praises of Lord, "O Lord! You are the provider of the world, Please foster me too. You are a friend of the meek. I am the meekest and the weakest. Help me by being my friend and the redeemer. Lord, you are the refuge of all and I am in your refuge and care. You are banisher of all fears. Banish my mundane fears. Lord, you are salvation of all creatures. Kindly salvage my life and soul. You are an ocean of mercy. Drown me in it, O Lord."

The prayers delighted the Lord. He spoke gladly, "Son, I am very pleased with you. I am granting you Dhruvaloka domain which is even beyond the reach of seven sage group. Now return home. Rule the kingdom for a long period and then come to my domain to make it your abode. On earth your glory will be remembered for eons."

Lord returned to his domain after booning young Dhruva. Gaining the sight of Lord had given extreme joy to Dhruva. He felt sad at the withdrawal of Lord. He wondered why he did not get assimilated into Lord? He would have to stay away from Lord to rule the kingdom for long many years.



Why? He felt like a person who had reached the greatest water body but returned without quenching the thirst. But now nothing could be done. He would have to go through whatever mundane duties the fate had determined for him. He left Madhuban and started for home.

When he reached the capital city, the king got the news of his arrival. The king could not believe it. But then he remembered what sage Narada had said about Dhruva. So it had come true. His son was coming back after getting blessed by Creator himself. His heart was overwhelmed with emotions. He set out with his queens, ministers, dignitaries and officials to welcome the young hero of devotion.

King Uttanpada got down from the chariot when he sighted him. He gathered his son in his arms being awash by emotions. Dhruva met his mother affectionately. The people hailed the young celebrity and he was given a grand public reception. Dhruva went into the palace and grew up normally. In the due course of time Uttanpada coronated prince Dhruva.

After putting the son on the throne he went to the forest to make penance.

Dhruva ruled for a long period. He sired two sons—Kalpa and Vatsara. Both his sons turned out to be great ones and became illustrious. Once the brother of Dhruva, prince Uttam went to Himalayan region with queen Suruchi on a hunting trip. There a yaksha caused their death. The news saddened and angered Dhruva. He went to that area to take revenge on the culprit yaksha with his army.

When yaksha learnt about the arrival of Dhruva he surrounded the attackers with a large force of yakshas. The two armies clashed. The yaksha force fought with anger



and great valour but it all proved futile against Dhruva and his army. There was some panic and commotion in the yaksha camp.

Dhruva could not see yaksha's army and he presumed the enemy had fled but he was wrong. Seeing Dhruva gain upper hand yakshas had gone into hiding through the sorcery and illusion powers. They were creating rain of fire, darkenss and storms. Sometimes it would rain heavily or loads of bones and skeletons would come down from the skies. One moment there would be pin drop silence and then it would get shattered with thunder claps. Dhruva was trying his best to destroy the maya illusions of yakshas. But it was also true that he was getting worried.

Seeing Dhruva in worry the sages and holy souls felt distressd. They said, "Dhruva, you are the true faithful of Lord, whose grace always shines on you. Why don't you invoke his name to counter the maya of yakshas?"

To destroy the maya of enemy Dhruva put the Narayana arrow to his bow string. As soon as he did that his great grand father Manu appeared in the sky. He called out to Dhruva, "Grandson! Please don't use that weapon. That weapon will wipe out the entire race of yakshas. It won't be proper. Do not commit that excess. Use forgiveness and mercy on the enemy. The life and death of everyone is determined by the *karma*. These yaksha are really not responsible for the death of Uttama and his mother. Their own *karma* did decide their fate. So, you must not use any extreme measure on the yakshas."

Dhruva got the message and mulled over it. He bowed to the wish of his great grand father and returned to his own kingdom.



The good sense and forgiveness of Dhruva was appreciated by Kubera, the lord of yakshas. He appeared to Dhruva and spoke, "King Dhruva! You are great indeed. You had the power to destroy yakshas but you held your hand using restraint. It impressed me. You can ask for any boon you like."

Dhruva said with humility, "O Yaksha Lord! I just want you to make my heart ever beamed into the Lord. He may ever be depicted my mind. I only wish for that boon of you."

Kubera withdrew after saying, "So be it!" And Dhruva again put himself to the affairs of the kingdom. After a long time of rule one day a divine craft arrived from the domain of Vishnu. The attendants of the craft said, "King Dhruva! Lord remembers you. You may come to his domain with us leaving the earth. It is time. We have come to escort you."

Dhruva was very pleased. He took leave of his near and dear ones before getting aboard the divine craft. When the craft travelled to some distance up, Dhruva remembered his folly. He had forgotten his mother Suniti. He spoke to the attendants, "Divine sirs! Please take the craft down to earth. I don't want to go to the domain of Lord without my mother."

The attendants informed, "King! you need not worry about her. A craft carrying her has already preceded us."

Happily Dhruva went to the domain of Lord and got the permission to make it his abode. The ones who put their total trust in Lord they gain peace and joy like Dhruva. Moksha is gained after death.



## 9

**DIVINE PRANKS OF BABY KRISHNA**

Nanda and Yashoda were indeed blessed souls in whose laps Krishna worked his baby miracles. Even the goddess of learning, Sharda can't correctly describe the great luck of that couple. According to the scriptures Nanda was a vasu in a previous life. Yashoda was his wife even in that life. The two had made penance and propitiated Brahma to earn the boon of limitless love and affection for Lord. To make it come true Lord had worked divine arrangement to be the foster child of Nanda and Yashoda as baby Krishna.

As Krishna grew up with Balrama he began to play around with other children of milk folks, better known as gops and gopis. He started his pranks by stealing butter from pots and eating the dollops with his mates.

Baby Krishna had gained expertise in scooping out butter chunks from high hanging pitchers. Often he would crack holes in the bottoms of the pitchers with pointed poles. He and his friends would catch the falling dollops of butter in their mouths by stationing themselves underneath the hanging pots. Often he used to smash the pots of butter, curd or milk to the horror of Yashoda.

Gopis used to go to Yashoda with complaints against Krishna whenever he cracked the pots of butter or curd while they carried them on their heads. The complaints were about breaking pots, stealing curd or butter and that of spilling milk.







Krishna would be present while Yashoda heard those complaints. He would argue, "Mother! In the early morning I go to the forest to graze the cattle and return home only in the evening. You can see I have no time for stealing butter or curd. How can I be in the two places at the same time? You can imagine yourself!"

But Yashoda knew that her darling child was indeed guilty and all the stories of his pranks were true. She could do nothing but sweetly smile.

Gopis found it hard to catch Krishna red handed in the act. He would more often than not outsmart them. But one day, a gopi did catch Krishna in the act. His hands were smeared in butter and lips were plastered-white. Some butter chunks stuck to his cheeks and nose. He was taken to Yashoda in the same tell-tale state. The gopi said, "Mother Yashoda! Today you will have to believe that your Krishna indeed mooches our precious butter. Look at his face and hands. Butter is all over him. What more proof do you need?"

Yashoda stared at Krishna disapprovingly and with artificial ire said, "What is she saying, baby Krishna? Have you rustled her butter?"

Krishna made a cry-baby face and said, "Mother! It is all a conspiracy. They are all after me for some reason. They caught me and smeared me with butter to make me look guilty like this, see?"

Yashoda could not help laughing at the cry-baby face of Krishna. Even the complaining gopi burst out laughing.

When the complaints became too large to ignore or handle, Yashoda decided to bind the baby Krishna by a rope. She wrapped the rope around his waist but it fell short by a few inches for the ends to be tied. She tied other ropes and joined



two ropes by a knot but in the binding exercise each time the rope ends would fall short by some inches. At last exasperated and frustrated Yashoda threw up her hands and gave up cursing Krishna. But he put her at ease by himself getting bound.

There were two trees in the courtyard. They were close enough leaving only a small gap. Infact they were two cursed sons of Kubera. In the previous life the two had got drunk once and were doing drunken mischiefs. Sage Narada happened to arrive there. The two inebriated ones offended Narada who put a curse on them to be trees in the courtyard of Nanda to be redeemed by Krishna at the appointed time.

One day, Yashoda tied Krishna to a wooden mortar with a rope. Baby Krishna crawled on the floor dragging along the mortar and came out to the courtyard. He playfully crawled through the narrow gap between the trees but the mortar got wedged across the trees. Baby Krishna pulled on and the trees came down uprooted. The curse had got lifted off the two. In divine forms the sons of Kubera thanked baby Krishna and flashed heavenwards.

One day gop mates of Krishna went to Yashoda and revealed, "Mother! Your Krishna has eaten a clay chunk."

Yashoda ran out and grabbed Krishna screaming, "Boy! Have you eaten clay!"

Krishna shook his head innocently. "No Maa! I have eaten no clay. The gops are lying."

Yashoda said, "I know you have eaten. They are not lying. You are the one who should be telling a lie. Open your mouth."

Innocently Krishna opened his mouth and Yashoda was stunned to see the inside of the baby Krishna's mouth. She



could see the entire universe in there. She herself was there in his mouth.

She stood frozen. Baby Krishna worked his divine maya to make her forget what she had seen. That way she could again be her normal self instead of being an overwhelmed idiot.

Meanwhile, their enemy Kansa was sending demons to destroy Krishna. The elders decided that Krishna and Balrama would be safer in Vrindavana in place of Gokul. So, all the people of Gokul migrated to Vrindavana and started living there.



## 10

**KALIA CRUSHING**

It were the days of summer. Krishna was grazing cattle along with his cowherd mates. The boy and the girls were playing games and cows munched grass scattered all over the place on the bank of Yamuna. Soon the heat made them all thirsty for water. They drank water of the river and fell down unconscious or dead, the cows and the cowherds all.

Krishna watched his mates hit the ground. He ran to the dead boys, girls and the cows. He noticed that a bluish foam was oozing out of the mouths of fallen animals and humans. It shocked and grieved Krishna. He used his divine nectar power and revived them all. All those who were dead a moment ago were again up on their feet.

A little off the main river a big pool had formed linked to the river through a duct. It was unusually deep. In the pool lived a horrific python called Kalia. It lived there with its wives. Kalia was a very venomous creature. The pool had become his venom solution which infected the river too through the duct connection. The river too had become venomated. The water of the pool used to boil with venom effect making a hissing noise. A great many humans and the animals had died having come into contact with that poison pool. The terror of the Kalia venom pool had spread far and wide. The elders had not warned the cowherd kids as the fact was too scary. No kid would have agreed to graze the cattle had he been told about Kalia. That is why the







boys were always advised to take the cattle to forest pastures.

But someone had warned Krishna about it and he had seen with his own eyes the truth of Kalia. To deliver the people from Kalia menace Krishna made up his mind to deal with the sea dragon. After all he had incarnated just to protect people from the evil forces. It was his divine duty now.

On the river bank there was a Kadamba tree. Its branches touched down the water of the river under which Kalia lived. Krishna climbed up the tree and jumped into the water where it was boiling due to venom effect. He splashed into the churning and bubbling waters and then disappeared.

Kalia was surprised to see a boy diving towards it without caring for the poisoned water. It shot itself towards the boy hissing furiously. Krishna and Kalia got entangled in a struggle to get the better of each other. The cowherds saw the deadly battle raging in the boiling and swirling waves of water. They yelled and called out to Krishna anxiously. Even the birds and animals started screaming and shrieking at the sight.

Some cowherds ran to Nanda and Yashoda to tell them about the frightening sight of Krishna taking on the horrific dragon. On that day Krishna had gone on grazing business without being accompanied by Balrama. Nanda and Yashoda were mortified to hear how their darling Krishna had climbed the Kadamba tree and jumped into the river at that dangerous spot to confront the demonic dragon. Yashoda started crying for her heart throb.

Meanwhile, Kalia and Krishna were still at war inside the river waters. Although gops, gopis, Nanda and Yashoda had already seen power of their Krishna, yet they were apprehensive. Something could go wrong any day. They ran to the river bank and the women folk were wailing fearfully.



The atmosphere had become grim.

Inside the water Krishna realised how his foster parents and his mates were anxious about his safety. He could see the heart of Yashoda bleeding for him and wished no more suffering to her and baba Nanda. So far he had been just playing with Kalia dragon. To end the game he slipped out of the coil hold of Kalia and climbed on its thousands of hoods and began to crush them with his feet. In this exercise he appeared to be performing a grotesque dance on the hoods.

The hoods of Kalia began to bleed. Still continuing his deadly dance he rose above water to the great relief of his near and dear ones. They now began to cheer him on.

Seeing Kalia in grave danger his wives come up to pray to Krishna, "Lord! By nature we are full of faults and evils. Being slow brains we could not see divinity behind your incredible power and courage. We are at your mercy. Kindly spare our husband, Kalia."

Kalia also spoke groaning in pain, "O Lord! I seek your forgiveness and surrender to you. Being a water python I am full of venom, angst, evil and ill will besides having a dim brain. I could not grasp your truth. I am at your mercy and pray for pardon."

The prayers of Kalia and his wives cooled down the anger of Krishna. He took mercy on the dragon and said, "Kalia! You shall no more live here. You must go to the sea." Kalia agreed to do so and went away along with his females.

Lord Krishna protected the cows, cowherds and his people in the similar way from other demons too like Davagni and Pralambasura. The people had come to believe that their Krishna indeed was an incarnation of divine force Supreme. They felt so lucky and blessed about it.



## 11

**DELUSION OF BRAHMA**

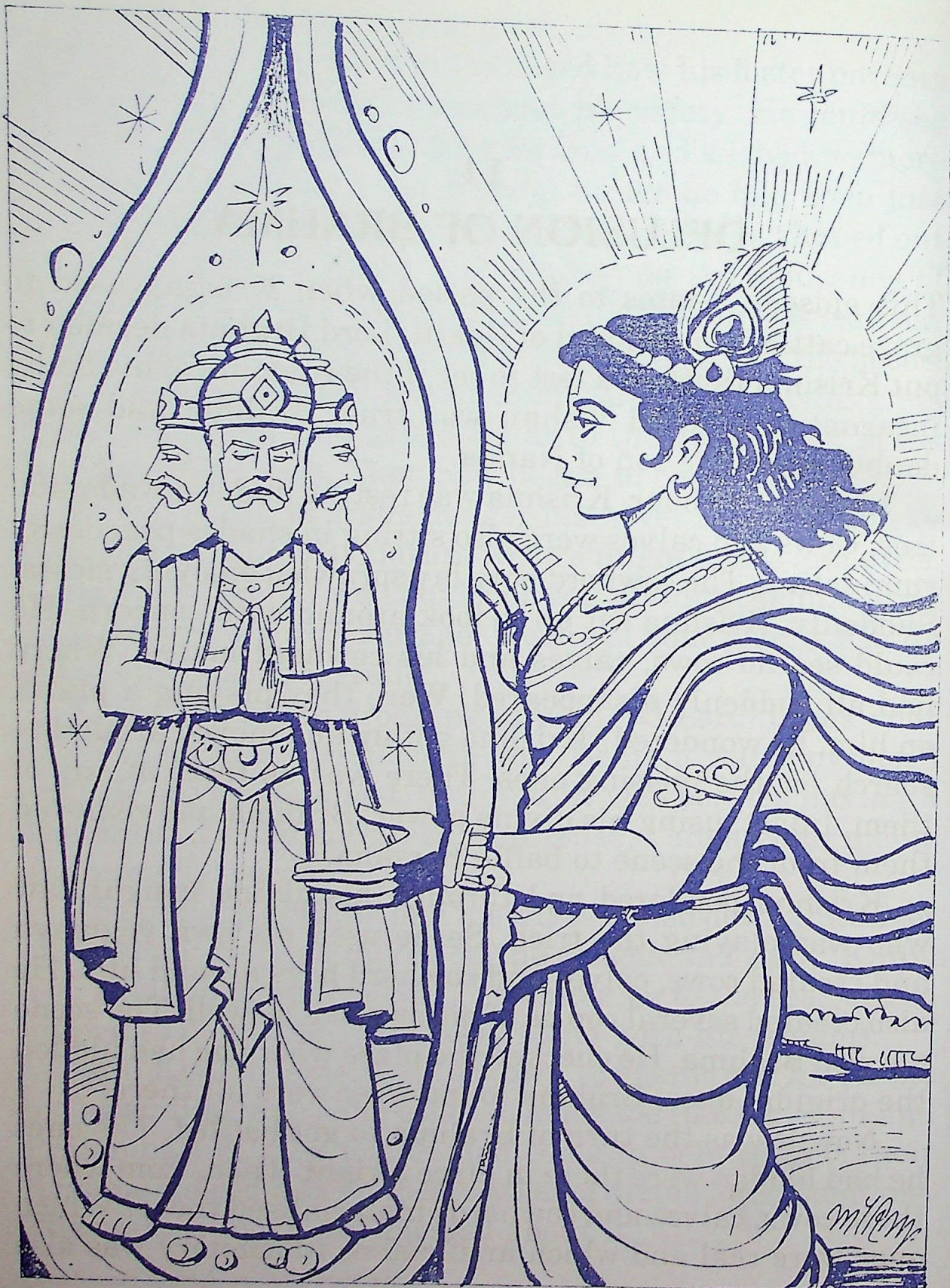
This episode relates to the period when Krishna used to graze cattle as a cowherd of Gokul. Lord Brahma decided to put Krishna through a test to see if the rumours of his being incarnation of Lord Vishnu was true. Brahma had some doubts about the son of Nanda.

It was moon hour. Krishna was resting under a Kadamba tree. Cows and calves were also sitting in shades peacefully ruminating. The cowherd boys lay sprawled enjoying siesta. Suddenly, Krishna sat up to look around with concern. He could see no cows, calves and his cowherd mates. Where had all suddenly disappeared. Were they playing a prank on him, he wondered? Krishna got up and moved around to search for the missing ones. There was no trace of any of them, Infact, using his divine power, Brahma had removed them from the scene to baffle Kirshna.

Krishna pondered and through his divine insight saw who was playing the trick. So he used his own yogmaya and created cows, calves and cowherd boys around him. He also created several copies of his own self as well. The scene puzzled Brahma. He checked the place where he had hidden the original ones. Brahma found they were all there.

Now it was the turn of Brahma to get baffled. The ones he had hidden were there in place alright. Then, from where those cows, calves and cowherds materialised there? Which ones were real and which artificial or illusionary was also







a puzzle? At last Brahma gave up and prayed, "Forgive me for harbouring doubts about you, O son of Nanda! I apologies for putting you to silly test. Now I know who you are, My Lord. Free me of my delusion."

Krishna smiled and asked invisible Brahma, "Holy Father! Why have you hidden my cows, calves and mates?"

Brahma bowed before kid Krishna. The illusionary cows, calves, cowherds faded out and the real ones materialised. They all hailed Krishna.



## 12

## GOVARDHANA ON FINGER TIP

It was early monsoon period. Clouds had started rolling in the skies. Cool breezes were blowing. The earth looked darkish giving the hint of imminent rain.

One morning, Krishna woke up to find the people engaged in some feverish activity. The gops and gopis were running around in excited mood. There was a grand preparation in progress for some worship. He did not know what the worship was about.

He pondered and tried to guess. Then, Krishna went to his foster father Nanda and asked, "Baba! What is going on? What yajna or worship everyone is preparing for? Who is the deity meant to be propitiated and for what?"

Nanda replied, "Son, the clouds yield water to us through rains. The water is our life. So it is for our cattle. Indra is god of water, rains. By his grace we get water every year at right time. During these days we people of Braja worship Indra to thank him for his grace. All this preparations you see are for the same purpose."

The revelations made Krishna think for some time. Then, he spoke, "Baba! Whatever one gets in this world is the fruit of his own *Karma*. *Karmas* earn one happiness or misery. It is *Karma*, our collective *Karma* that cause rains or drought strikes. Indra had nothing to do with the rains." Krishna relapsed into thoughts.

The words spoken by Krishna surprised Nanda and he







stared at the face of his kid. After a while, Krishna said, "Baba! I think you should not worship Indra. Govardhana hill is more deserving for our worship because it yields us so many useful things like grass for our cattle, herbs, plants, wood, stream, slates, minerals etc."

Soon the word spread around the colony that Krishna was advising against Indra worship and that he wanted Govardhana worshiped instead. First the people protested but then yielded to Krishna's desire. They had seen Krishna work miracles. Hence all the material collected for the worship was duly offered to Govardhana hill.

When Indra learnt about it he got angry. He called the doom's day clouds to converge over Braja and drown it in a massive deluge.

The black clouds began to roll towards Braja and the area got swallowed by darkness. The lightning began to flash and thunder claps shook the air. Storms blew. It appeared that Indra was about to wreak havoc on Braja. The people panicked.

Gops and gopis began to cry and wail. Some one lamented, "Krishna has landed us in deep trouble. Why did we have to stop the worship of Indra? Now what can we do? Who is going to protect us from the ire of Indra?"

Krishna consoled, "Do not give up, people of Braja! And do not worry Trust me. Collect all you cattle, children and valuables. We shall go to Govardhana hill and seek protection." As advised by Krishna the people moved towards the hill with families and their cattle. Krishna had reached the base of the hill before others. He fastened his short loin tight and then lifted the Govardhana hill on his finger creating a big shelter space underneath. He called out, "Well



folks! Take shelter under the hill along with your cattle.”

When Nanda, Yashoda and other people saw their Krishna standing smugly with the hill held up on one finger tip they were incredulous. Everyone hailed the feat of Krishna and took shelter under the hill. For seven days the clouds poured down water without any break, the storms blew and even hails came down like bullets. But all Braja people remained safe and sound. Krishna kept the hill up on his finger tip for seven days and nights.

At last Indra accepted defeat. His ego bubble had burst. He descended to face Krishna in defeat. He prayed, “Lord! Maya had slowed down my brain. That is how I could not understand you and your reality. Not I seek your mercy and pardon.”

As Indra departed skies opened up. No more rain fell. Krishna placed Govardhana in its original position.

When Kansa learnt about it he got the fright. He realised that the son of Nanda was his prophesied death. He made desperate attempts to kill Krishna and made his own death certain.



## 13

**INVITATION BY AKROORA**

During the period Krishna lived in Vrindavana, one day sage Narada paid a visit to the court of Kansa. He said, "King Kansa! The prophecy which predicted the arrival of your slayer had infact pointed at the son of Nanda, none else. Krishna is definitely the one who is supposed to deal death to you. Vasudeva and Nanda are bosom friends. They had exchanged the newborns when they were born. The girl you tried to kill was infact the baby of Yashoda. You know how it slipped off your hands and flashed up to become a goddess who told you that your death had arrived."

Krishna presently lives in Vrindavana. I do my duty in warning you. Do something if you can."

Kansa already had reasons to believe that Nanda's cowherd son was infact Devaki's 8th son. Narada has now confirmed the fact. There was no scope for any doubts now that Krishna was his predicted death dealer.

Kansa got angry. He put Vasudeva and Devaki again in prison revengefully. When his father Ugrasena sympathised with the imprisoned couple Kansa threw him too in a dungeon.

Then, Kansa called Keshi demon and ordered, "You shall go to Vrindavana and eliminate Krishna some way or whatever. It is your test."

But Keshi met the same fate as other demons had. Krishna despatched it to hell in no time. The demon could







not hurt even a hair of Krishna.

Now Kansa hatched elaborate plan to kill Krishna. Under the plan he organised a grand wrestling competition in Mathura. It was supposed to be a kind of great fair. Great many people and big names of the area were invited to the fair. Nanda and his two sons were also to be invited. The idea was that in his own den he would easily be able to plot the death of the boys under his own supervision.

Kansa instructed his champion wrestlers named Chanoor and Mushtika to use some hard tackle or trick to squeeze out life of the Vrindavana boys. Not satisfied with this, Kansa said to the mahout of the ill tempered Kublayapeed elephant, "When Krishna and Balrama enter the wrestling arena your shall turn Kublayapeed at them in drunken state to get them trampled upon. You shell be rewarded for successful attempts."

Kansa pondered over the issue of who would go to invite Nanda and his sons. He did not want to raise any suspicions or Nanda would not send his sons to the fair. The messenger had to be a confidant of Nanda. And only Akroora fulfilled that qualification. Akroora was the gentleman of Mathura. He was a simple soul and Yadava as well. A great faithful of Lord he was.

So, Kansa said to him, "Akroora sir! You know about the wrestling fair we are holding. You are requested to go to your friend Nanda on my behalf and invite him and his sons respectfully."

Akroora was not simpleton not to understand the game of evil Kansa. But he accepted to go so as not to miss the chance of beholding Krishna, the incarnation of Lord. And he could guess with those incredible powers Krishna had



displayed no harm could come to him.

He rode on a chariot that sped towards Vrindavana. In his heart he laughed at the stupidity of Kansa who was inviting the divine force that had already destroyed giant demons like Pootna, Bakasura, Aghasura, Keshi etc. hoping to tame him. Surely he was inviting his own death.

And so it proved. Krishna and Balrama defeated all the moves of Kansa and in the end trampled upon him to kill him mercilessly. Thus were people delivered from the tyranny of Kansa.



## 14

**JARASANDHA ATTACK**

Kansa had two queens namely, Asti and Prapti. Both of them were daughters of king Jarasandha of Magadha. After the killing of Kansa by Krishna both of them went to Magadha as no one in Mathura would provide them shelter.

The wives of Kansa told their father Jarasandha about how mercilessly Krishna-Balrama duo had killed the Mathura wrestlers before they brutally murdered Kansa. In a revengeful mood the two used a lot of exaggeration and imagination to fuel the mind of Jarasandha. They cried a lot to good effect. Jarasandha was a ferocious warrior and several kings he had for allies. A big army he commanded. The very sight of his widowed daughters aroused his anger against Krishna and his brother. To grind the Yadava to dust he set out with a huge army for Mathura and laid a siege.

To Ugrasena, the recrowned ruler, he sent a word, "Hand over Mathura to me otherwise I will crush it into rubble and dust." Although Mathura had a small army, yet Krishna and Balrama decided to face Jarasandha in the battle field. They sent back a message to Jarasandha, "The true warriors don't waste time on words. They act. If you dare take Mathura from us by dint of your sword."

The angered Jarasandha attacked with full force.

To face the attack Krishna and Balrama also came out on their chariots. They had a small force and weapons were







short. Still they managed to defeat the enemy and Jarasandha was taken prisoner.

He was produced before the king, Ugrasena. The king treated him generously and freed him. This noble gesture did not change the heart of Jarasandha.

He carried the grudge and hatred against Yadava in his heart.

He again launched attacks on Mathura.

Seventeen times he raided Mathura and each time got defeated. The successive defeats hurt him and saddened his soul. He decided to give up the throne to make penance.

But his allies and well wishers stopped him from doing so. They convinced him that the series of defeats would soon turn into a grand victory.

He again prepared for yet another attack and gathered new powers and allies. Complete ruin of Mathura he aimed at and imprisoning Krishna and Balrama was his dream.

But did he succeed?

No!



## 15

**RUKMINI AFFAIR**

Lord Krishna and Balrama earned quite a glory as the lords of newly founded city of Dwarka on the western coast of the land. They became much respected and feared names amongst the kings and the regents all around.

A king named Raivata got his daughter Revati married to elder Yadava, Balrama impressed with his valour, splendeur and fame. Krishna rejoiced the marriage of his loved brother.

He too secretly wished to get married.

During that period Vidarbha used to be ruled by a very illustrious king called Bhishmaka. A man of rectitude he was. Kundinpur was his capital city. He had five sons and a daughter. The eldest of the sons was named Rukmi and the girl called Rukmini.

Rukmini was a beauty and a girl of high qualities. She had all the attributes that goddess Laxmi had. So, she also was called as Laxmi-swaroopa (literally meaning Alike Laxmi).

When she grew up to the marriageable age, her father began to worry for suitable groom for her. Meanwhile, Rukmini had been hearing a lot about the Lord of Dwarka, Krishna. People used to say, "Krishna is a super hero, a divine character. There is no other person like him in the entire world."

Rukmini was feeling attracted to this strange character







who looked so romantically mysterious. Young Rukmini got emotionally attached to the iconic figure of Krishna and made up her mind that she would marry only him and none else. On the other hand Krishna had also learnt about her beauty and desirable qualities. Thus, Krishna and Rukmini had become silent admirers of each other.

Her elder brother Rukmi however hated the Lord of Dwarka. Rukmi wanted his sister to marry his friend Shishupala who also had no liking for Krishna. Rukmi was a strong character and knew how to throw his weight around. He prevailed upon his father and got him agree to marry Rukmini to Shishupala. They even fixed the date of marriage and the groom was duly intimated. Rukmini was not consulted on the matter as the wish of a female child was given little importance during those days. The males called all the shots.

When Rukmini learnt about it she was very upset. She sent a secret messenger to Dwarka with a letter for Krishna which read, 'O lord of love! I have in my heart accepted you as my husband. I shall not marry any other man except you. My father and my brother are marrying me off to Shishupala against my wish. The date had been fixed. Our family custom is that a bride before her marriage goes to worship goddess Girija at her temple situated outside the town. I shall also follow that custom. I pray to you to be at the Girija temple to accept me as your bride. If I do not find you there I shall take my life. Now my life and honour are in your hands.'

He reacted as if he was just waiting for that note. He at once got on his chariot, also the messenger on it and raced towards Kundinpura. After his departure Balrama also



learnt about the developments from a guard. He would not let Krishna face the enemies single handedly. So, Balrama too set out with a large army in support of his brother.

Meanwhile, as Shishupala had already got the message he reached Kundinapura with a large marriage party. It was an army of friendly kings like Jarasandha, Pondraka, Shalva, Vakranetra etc. and their respective paraphernalia plus army units. All the things who were antogonistic to Krishna were there in the party.

It was the day of wedding. Entire city was gaily and festively decorated. The auspicious instrumental music and songs were sweetening the atmoshphere. There was a great excitement in the city amongst people. And the people in the know suspected that something was going to happen. A rumour was making rounds at the folksy levels that Krishna was on his way to their city or was already there in disguise. The women folk knew the secret romantic feelings of Rukmini fanned around by the palace maids and the women who frequented the palace to supply feminine things to the inner female sanctum of the royal abode. They infact, liked the romantic liasion of their princess with the amorous lord, Krishna.

The wedding hour was set at night. And in the evening as per custom, the princess Rukmini bedecked in the bridal attire set out for the Girija temple to worship the deity. She was accompanied by a bevy of her friends and maids plus the unit of body guards. She looked grim and a bit worried because her messenger to Kirshna had not yet returned. She worshiped the goddess praying, "O divine mother! Fulfil my wish please. I can not marry any other man than my heart's lord, Krishna. Help me."



When Rukmini emerged out of the temple she saw her messenger who just nodded his head with a smile. They did not talk. But Rukmini got the hint that her prayer had been answered.

Suddenly, Krishna materialised there out of nowhere surprising every one. The guards could not understand what was going on. In a flash Krishna grabbed the wrist of Rukmini and put her on the chariot. Then, the chariot sped away before anyone could react.

The news spread like fire that the princess Rukmini had been abducted by Krishna and he was on way to Dwarka with the prize. The information infuriated Shishupala. He screened and ranted. With his friendly kings and their armies he set out to catch up with his bride. But on the way he was confronted by Balrama and the mighty Yadava army. A fierce battle broke out. Balrama and his army fought ferociously and defeated the armies of Shishupala and his friends who returned to Kundinpura thoroughly demoralised.

Rukmi could not take it. In seething anger he shuddered. He ran to catch up with Krishna with his own army. He had taken a vow either he would return to the capital with Krishna bound in ropes or would not return at all.

Rukmi and Krishna fought a fierce battle. Krishna defeated him and tied him to his chariot to drag him to death. But Balrama untied Rukmi and said to his brother, "Krishna dear! Now this man is our relative, brother-in-law whether you like it or not. A relative is not punished like this."

Rukmi kept his word. He did not return to Kundinpura. He founded a new town and began to live there. It is believed that his descendents still live there to this day.



Krishna took Rukmini to Dwarka and married her formally with all due customs and traditions. She gave birth to Pradyumna, the incarnation of god of love, Kama.

Amongst the many principal queens of Krishna, Rukmini had a special place. Krishna admired her love and devotion. There are a lot of tales related to Rukmini that depict her devotion to Krishna and her romantic sentiments.



## 16

**CURSE ON PARIKSHITA**

When Yudhishtira departed for Himalayas with his brothers and Draupadi, the lone surviving heir of Pandavas, Prince Parikshita sat on throne to rule the kingdom of Hastinapur. He became a much praised and admired ruler. Very religious, valiant and illustrious, he was. Eravati was the name of his queen. She gave birth to four sons. Janmejaya was the eldest of them.

Once he was told by the astrologers that the age of evil, Kaliyuga had commenced. The revelation saddened him and he was a worried man. Kaliyuga meant multiplication of sins and violence. He made up his mind that he would put down the evil doers with firm hand.

It had become necessary for him to demonstrate his power to put fear in the hearts of the forces of darkness. He set out on a world conquest mission. He got atop his battle chariot with his arms and drove out followed by his army. He was full of enthusiasm, zeal and battle spirit.

Wherever he went and fought, he vanquished enemies. No opponent could really give him hard time. At night the professional story tellers would recount to him the tales of the valiant deeds of his Pandava ancestors. He knew Lord Krishna acted like their guardian angel. Whenever Pandavas were in tight spot Krishna bailed them out.

The history was full of such incidents.

Parikshita was told when he was in his mother's womb







Ashwatthama had used Brahmastra weapon to destroy him in foetus state but Lord Krishna had protected him through his divine power. Parikshita naturally felt grateful to Krishna and was inspired to become a devotee of Lord. For him Krishna was his protector, provider and sustenance of life.

It was a night time. Parikshita was sleeping in his camp. He was woken up by murmur of some conversation. Curiosity brought him out of his camp to investigate. He saw a bull and a cow were engaged in the conversation. The bull had only one leg and the cow was pretty but sad. Parikshita held his breath to hear what they were talking. What he discovered was sad. The bull was the Faith and cow was embodiment of Earth. The sins of Kaliyuga was troubling them. The Faith had become lame and the Earth miserable.

Parikshita was just pondering over the situation when he sighted an evil looking man who was holding a thick stick. He came to the pair of bull and cow and started beating them with his stick mercilessly. King Parikshita could no more be a mere spectator. He put arrow to his bow and screamed angrily, "Man! Who are you and why are you thrashing these innocent creatures? Tell me the truth or I will riddle your body with arrows."

The man trembled. He stammered in wavering voice, "King! I am Kaliyuga. I am in your shelter. Please forgive me."

Parikshita was seething in anger and despised that mean character for his unholy act. But his meek request and politeness cooled his anger. Like a brave soldier he could not be harsh to anyone who sought refuge and his mercy.

So, Parikshita forgave Kaliyuga. The latter spoke, "King!



Where may I live! Because now I am dependant on your mercy and decision. Allot me my abode."

Parikshita thought over his request and said, "In four acts you may live namely—1. Gambling, 2, Drinking, B.Adultry and 4. Violence."

Kaliyuga pleaded, "King! The four acts are not enough for my living. A little more space I need. Give me one more place."

Parikshita generously agreed and said, "Gold!"

Kaliyuga was a very evil character. King Parikshita treated him kindly but Kaliyuga felt no gratitude or obligation to the former. Kaliyuga at once made the golden crown of Parikshita his home.

Although Parikshita was full of true devotion to Lord Krishna, yet he did not escape the ill influence of Kaliyuga. His mind became dim and arrogance set in his heart.

One day, Parikshita went on a hunting trip. In the forest he felt hungry and thirsty. He went into the ashram of sage Shamika situated nearby. By chance the sage was in meditation cuts off from outside realities. No one else was present there. Parikshita said to the sage, "I am thirsty, holy sir. Please give me some water to drink."

The sage gave no response. How could he reply? He had withdrawn himself deep inside from the outer consciousness. Due to Kaliyuga effect Parikshita failed to realise it due to dulled up mind. He very arrogantly jumped to the conclusion that the sage was deliberately insulting him. He flew into a rage. He pick up a dead snake that lay at a little distance away by the tip of his arrow and put it in the neck of the medittating sage like rosary.

Soon after his departure, the son of the sage arrived at



the ashram. He was a learned scholar whose tongue could spell an effective curse. The dead snake in his father's neck anguished him. He tried to find out who had committed that dastardly act. He yogic insight told him that king Parikshita was his culprit. In anger he took water from his holy bowl and sprinkled it spelling a curse on the culprit, "Parikshita! You have committed a heinous act in putting dead snake in the neck of my meditating father. You will pay the price for it. On the seventh day Takshaka snake will bite you and you shall die."

Parikshita was dismayed when he learnt about the curse. He left the royal palace, throne and all luxuries to live in a hut on the bank of Ganga. There sage Shukdeva recited the holy stories of Bhagwat to him to salvage his after life and earn his soul moksha. The rumour spread in the kingdom that due to the curse put by the son of a great sage the Takshaka snake would bite the king to death. The hearing of the holy recitation by the sage also became known to all. Consequently several sages, scholars and faithfuls converged on the bank of Ganga to join the exercise and get the benefit of holy act.

Meanwhile, the snake, Takshaka set out to bite the accursed king. Sage Kashyapa learnt about it. When he realised that the snake bite was going to kill the king he became very anxious and worried as king Parikshita was a very religious and noble king for the subjects. He decided not to let the king die. He could neutralise the snake venom with his holy mantra power.

So, Kashyapa set out of his abode. On the way, the sage and Takshaka ran into each other.

Takshaka asked, "Holy sir, where do you go?" Kashyapa



told the truth, "I am going to keep king Parikshita alive. Due to a curse of a sage he is going to die when Takshaka snake bites him. My mantra would neutralise the snake venom. And my hands have nectar effect. I put my hand on the bite and the venom effect would die."

The claim of the sage hurt the ego of Takshaka. He spoke arrogantly, "Sage! I am Takshak. You cannot kill the effect of my poison. Please don't make a fool of yourself. Better you go back."

Kashyapa said, "Whether I neutralise your venom or not is yet to be seen. You bite Parikshita and I will save him if I can. There is no question of anyone making a fool of himself."

Kashyapa had said his words in a very polite and moderate tone. Takshaka did not appreciate it. He spoke egotically, "Holy men! If you are so sure of your mantra power we can test it on the tree in front of us. With my poison I will wither it away and you will revive it. Easy."

Kashyapa politely said, "Snake Lord! I don't want to get dragged into arguments. But if you insist I accept the challenge."

Takshaka sneaked its way to the roots of the tree and spit its venom on the roots. The tree withered and shrivelled in no time. It became a dried up caricature. Even the birds living on that tree died.

Takshaka said, "So, holy sir, see the affect of my venom? In the same way I will dry up the life of Parikshita. Now it is your turn to put back life in it, regreen it if you dare to."

Sage Kashyapa went to the tree and caressed its poisoned roots gently with his palm. The incredible thing happened. In a mad rush life surged through the tree, buds broke out,



branches sprouted shiny leaves and tree was again a mass of green spectacle. Takshaka stared in awe.

Sage Kashyapa asked, "What do you say, son?"

Takshaka bowed his head to the sage saying, "Sir, I accept defeat. You win. You certainly have the answer to my deadly venom. But I have a request to you."

"Spell it, Takshaka. I am all ears."

"Please don't go to save Parikshita. Let the words of the son of the sage Shamika come true. You may take any amount of money for it," Takshaka offered.

Kashyapa said, "O king of serpents! Do you want to turn your defeat into victory by bribing? I am not going to save Parikshita because he is a mighty king but to save a noble ruler who always has the welfare of the people in his heart and is a pious soul."

As the two argued a prophecy was heard, "Sage Kashyapa! The time of Parikshita is up. He must go. Don't try to save him. Let Takshaka do his task." After hearing it the sage returned right from there.

On the seventh day Takshaka bit Parikshita and the latter died. Parikshita departed to the after world but left behind a lesson for us that one must think carefully before doing any act. In Kaliyuga anyone can err or default but Shrimad Bhagwad is there to deliver.



## 17

**SELF IMMOLATION BY SATI**

Daksha Prajapati had several daughters of beauty and qualities. But Daksha was not satisfied. He wished for a girl blessed with divine powers. He made a penance to beget one. A long time of dedication made goddess Bhagwati appear to him and announce, "I am pleased with your penance. I will myself incarnate as your special daughter. 'Sati' will be my name. As Sati I will expand my role as a divine power."

Thus, Bhagwati took birth as Sati, the daughter of Daksha family. She did have extraordinary qualities and capabilities. Sati could work miracles and enact spectacles which stunned her family.

When Sati grew up Daksha began thinking of her marriage. He consulted Brahma on the matter. The Lord said, "Sati is incarnation of original power divine, Bhagwati Adya. She is female chapter and the male chapter of the same phenomenon is Lord shiva. Hence, the only suitable made in heaven match for your Sati is Shiva."

Accordingly Daksha married Sati to Shiva. The couple lived at Kailasha in marital bliss. Although Shiva was the son-in-law of Daksha Prajapati yet an unfortunate incident spoiled their relationship. Daksha began to hate Shiva like an enemy. The enmity and the antagonism was so intense for any thought of reconciliation. It happened when Brahma held a meeting for advancement and strengthening of the







holy faith. All the gods and deities were present there. On one side Lord Shiva sat in indifferent mood. Just then Daksha arrived. All stood up in his honour except Shiva. He did not even greet his father-in-law. Daksha took it as a deliberate affront to him by Shiva. A sudden feeling of jealousy and hatred for Shiva seized his mind. At once he made up his mind to avenge the insult meted out to him.

Infact, there was no question of Shiva slighting his father-in-law. As often was the case Shiva's mind was beamed into his dear lord, Vishnu and his incarnate forms. In such moments his mind used to get set in perfect equanimous mode when all creatures were equal to him. He would have taken arrival of Indra or a fly in the same uniform spirit. Sitting in his abode at Kailasha he chanted the name of 'Rama' in every breath. Once Sati, out of curiosity asked who 'Rama' was that ever remained in his mind?

Lord Shiva replied "Dear, Rama is manifest form of unmanifest power Eternal. He is my Lord. Presently he roams the forests born as the elder son of Dasharatha, the king of Ayodhya. Sita is his wife." Sati was not very convinced. How could a human be incarnation of power supreme? Shiva also narrated how Rama was pining for Sita who had been abducted by demon king Ravana. It made Sati still more doubtful. Why should a god incarnate go crying around like an ordinary human for a woman? And he was supposed to be asking trees, bushes, plants, animals and birds the whereabouts of his wife. To Sati Rama looked an unlikely candidate to be the incarnation of God. Sati decided to test Rama and his supposed divinity. So, in Dandaka forest Sati materialised in the form of Sita in the path Rama treaded lamenting for Sita. He saw Sati in the



form of Sita. With widened eyes Rama bowed to her and spoke, "Mother! What are you doing alone in this dark forest? Where is my lord, Shiva?"

Sati was too stunned to offer any reply. In utter embarrassment she dissolved in thin air. She repented for doubting the divinity of Rama. Having committed the shameful act she rematerialised at Kailasha. Lord Shiva stared at her disapprovingly and rebuked, "Sati! You have done no good in putting my lord Rama to test to satisfy your silly doubting mind. Sita is like revered mother for me. You impostored her! Now I can't accept you as my better half. In this life we can not meet as man and woman. After your Sita act you invoke in my heart the same feelings as a mother does in the heart of her son."

The pronouncement of Shiva hit Sati like a blow. The words spoken by Shiva were irrevocable. She realised her blunder. But now what she had done could not be undone. Shiva withdrew himself into deep meditation disconnected from all other outer realities, situations and relationships. Sati meanwhile struggled to keep afloat in the sea of grief and remorse.

On the other side, Sati's father Daksha was holding a grand yajna at Kankhala. He had invited all the gods, deities and sages. But Shiva was left out alone because he still carried the grudge and hated Shiva. When Sati learnt that her father had organised a grand affair she became anxious to attend it. She wanted to go. Her desire was amplified by the fact she needed a change of scene due to the unhappy developments borne by her Sita act. As Shiva was in deep meditation she went to her parental home without seeking his premission.



*Some scriptures mention this event in different light as the following*—Once Shiva and Sati sat on Kailasha talking about something. Suddenly, they sighted a great many divine aerial craft flying overhead in the direction of Kankhala. Sati asked of Lord Shiva, “Lord! What are these craft and where do they go in such large number?”

Shiva replied, “Dear mine, your father is organising a great yajna. So, gods and deities are going to attend the event.”

Sati asked in surprise, “Lord, did my father not invite you to the yajna?”

“He carries a grudge and hates me. Why would he invite me?” Shiva revealed.

Sati pondered for a while and then spoke, “All my sisters would be there. A long time I have not met them. With your permission I would like to go for the family reunion and attend the yajna as well.”

Shiva advised, “Dear, going there without being invited will be improper. They might subject you to insult and ridicule. I am apprehensive about this whole affair.”

“But it is my father’s home. A daughter does not need any formal invitation to family events.”

Shiva reasoned, “Dear, it is not strictly a family event. A yajna it is. And a married daughter is really a better part of her husband. She is no more subject to her parents. No invitation to us means no invitation to you.”

But Sati failed to see the point.

She insisted on going to her father and family on the pretext of yajna. Shiva was left with no choice but to allow her. He knew also that Sati wanted to ask her father why he was so unreasonable with her husband.



Shiva sent a bodyguard with Sati called Virbhadra. She went to her parental home where no one welcomed her. Everyone seemed to be a part of a plot to ignore her.

Even her sisters laughed at her.

Her father Daksha said sarcastically, "Why have you come here to defile my yajna? You are a disgrace. Look at you sisters! How beautifully they are bedecked in jewellery and finery to add grace and glamour to my yajna. Here you are in a leopard pelt! What else can your cremation ground dwelling master of ghosts give you? Animal pelts or banana leaves to dress yourself in! What a shame!! And funeral pyre ash for cosmetics? How disgraceful!"

The words of her father shocked Sati who now realised that she had done no good in coming there. A women should not go even to her father without a formal invitation. But now she could do nothing as she was already there.

She stood silently in the presence of her ranting father. Then, she went to the yajna venue where the rituals were in progress. A host of sages and priests were conducting yajna seated around a great pit in which holy fire burnt with flames leaping up as oblations were being tossed or poured in. Sati could see oblation shares for every deity or god but no portion in the name of Shiva. She complained to her father, "Holy sir! There are shares in the name of all gods but I find no share allotted to the Lord of Kailasha. Why have you done away with rightful share for Lord Shiva?"

Daksha scornfully declared, "I don't consider your husband a god or deity. That joker wears bone rosaries, wears nothing and is merely a master of spirits and apparitions. Who would rank him amongst deities? He does not deserve any share."



Sati could tolerate affront to herself but blasphemy against her lord, Shiva, she would not take even from her father. She shuddered in disgust and anger. Her eyes flashed red and brows arched angrily. In extreme anguish words exploded out of her mouth, "Fie on all of you gods, deities, priests and sages in whose presence such blasphemy is being uttered! How do your ears hear invectives against the lord who can destroy the entire universe in a single glance of the third eye. He is a symbol of gender equality and a universal auspicious iconic figure. A woman must never hear ill words spoken against her man. Hear everyone that my father has insulted my lord in my face! Hence, I do not want to live any longer."

Thus making a declaration Sati jumped into the burning holy fire pit of yajna to the horror of all present there. With other oblations Sati too burnt, creating a macabre sight. Suddenly there was pandemonium in the venue. People screamed and exclaimed words of shock. The gods and deities rose up horrified. Sati's bodyguard Veerbhadra smouldered in anger. He ran into a rampage and began to destroy the yajna venue. In fury he beheaded a few. The sages, priests and gods fled as Veerbhadra roared like a mad beast. As news of Sati's immolation reached the ears of Lord Shiva he rose up like a mountain with lava of anger inside waiting to erupt. In that diabolic mood he stormed into Kankhala.

In stupor he stared at the burning body of his dear Sati. The memories of her love and devotion to him came rushing to his mind. An infinite melancholy descended on him. Intense grief began to roast his heart. The victor of Kama and the destroyer of the universe stood there lost in the death of his love.



Then, Shiva retrieved the charred body of Sati from the fire pit and loaded it on his shoulder. In that state he walked, walked and walked on the endless path of mourning. His grief stopped the earth from spinning, the air and water froze into stillness and the creatures or gods dared not breathe. It looked as if the creation had ceased to function or doom's day would come any moment.

At such perilous hour Lord Vishnu came forward to salvage the situation. He released his Chakra and it began to chop parts of Sati's burnt body off the shoulder of Shiva who walked on in stupor. When the entire body got off loaded in pieces, Lord Shiva returned to his conscious state and everything came back to normal functioning mode.

At fifty one places Sati's body parts had fallen....and all those became holy centres as 'Shakti Peeths!' In those centres Sati is worshipped in temples set up in her name. Such intense and pious was the love between Shiva and Sati.



## 18

## ARRIVAL OF PRAHALADA

The antagonism between gods and demons is very ancient. The two opposite ideologies are always at war. In theory gods stand for truth, piety and righteousness whereas demons were accused of being the followers of evil and negative values. When Lord Vishnu slayed the demon lord, Hiranyaksha, his brother got very angry and revengeful. He took a vow he would avenge the death of his brother.

He thought his task would become easy if he gained control over his death. He realised without that power he could not effectively deal with immortal gods. Hiranyakashipu needed an equaliser. So, he went to the forest and began to make penance to propitiate Lord Brahma to earn a boon of immortality. The gods got wind of it and realised the danger to them. They tried several tricks to defile or disrupt the penance exercise of the demon lord. For the penance making Hiranyakashipu was away from his capital to be into forest. Considering it an opportune time the gods raided the capital of the demons. The demon army tried to defend the capital but without the guidance of their king it was directionless. The demon soldiers fled from the battle in disarray.

Now the demon capital was in the control of the enemy.

The gods were arrogant in victory. They were gloating while departing after plundering the capital, they happened to see Kayadhu, the pious queen of Hiranyakashipu. They took her as their prisoner. She was in the family way at







that period. The gods were supposed to be the noble characters but the victory had spoiled them. Their minds had got poisoned with egoism. They were prone to several such weaknesses that is why they never gained total victory over demons who often surprised gods with streaks of nobility.

Guru Brihaspati did not like the mean act of his gods. He admonished them. "What would you do with her as your prisoner? She is a woman. No ill treatment should be meted out to any woman. Those who disgrace women they get defeated sooner or later. Kayadhu is a pious lady and she is pregnant. Leave her in the ashram of sage Narada. He would do whatever he deems fit."

The gods obeyed and left Kayadhu in the ashram of Narada. At the ashram she started to live. Sage Narada everyday recited to her the sermons on the glory of Lord and devotion to him. He would reveal, "Everything else is meaningless in this world except the faith in Lord Vishnu, the manifest form of Power Supreme. He is the soul truth and the ultimate reality. One must dedicate one's life in the worship and meditation of Lord Vishnu. The real happiness and peace lie only in the true devotion and thoughts of Lord. Everything we see around is just maya of Lord."

Kayadhu used to listen to the sermons of Narada very carefully and with total devotion. Due to the effect of those sermons the child she was carrying in her womb got moulded into a devotee of Lord. Noble qualities got seeded in the foetus. As soon as he was born he began to reveal his devotional tendencies. Those pious values were deeply etched in his mind.



Meanwhile, Hiranyakashipu was engaged in penance making to get the boon of immortality. The heat, rain, snow, hails, storms and Kayadhu's imprisonment could not deter him from his mission. At last Lord Bhrama was forced to appear to him to grant his wish.

He materialised and said, "Son, I am pleased. Spell your wish."

Hiranyakashipu opened his eyes and bowed to Lord. He prayed, "Holy father! Give me a boon to be immortal. I should not die at the hands of any man, god or creature and neither during day or night."

Brahma granted the wish and disappeared. Now Hiranyakashipu was ecstatic. Having gained almost immortality he returned to his capital. He had become an arrogant ruler. The power of the boon had gone to his head. He found pleasure and satisfaction in tormenting scholars and noble people. Little did he know that Lord Vishnu could find a way to put his tyranny to end.

And so it happened. Lord Vishnu incarnated as Narsimha, a man-beast form that tore Hiranyakashipu to death. This episode proved that no one could go beyond the reach of the death. One must put one's trust in God instead of trying to escape from death.



## 19

**DUSHYANTA & SHAKUNTALA**

In Puru dynasty Dushyanta has been a very familiar name. He was very valiant and illustrious king. He had a reputation for being a people caring ruler.

Once he went on a hunting trip and came upon the ashram of sage Kanva in the forest. The sage was not present there. He had gone out on a preaching mission. A very pretty young lady was watering the flower plants in the garden of the ashram.

King Dushyanta could not help asking, "Lady! Whose daughter are you?"

The young lady replied, "Respected sir, sage Kanva is my foster father. This place is his ashram. He is not home. My name is Shakuntala. Sage Vishwamitra is my real sire."

Dushyanta thought for a while and hesitatingly said, "Well, I am king Dushyanta on a hunting trip here. I lost my way. It is getting dark now as the sun has gone down. I would like to spend the night here if the inmates of the ashram have no objection."

Shakuntala invited him in as the honoured guest. King Dushyanta was charmed by the beauty and the cultured manner of the lady. Infact, he could not lift his eyes off her face as his host Shakuntala took excellent care of his needs. He got so enamoured that he stayed there for several days. A secret love affair blossomed between Dushyanta and Shakuntala. The romance resulted in the womb of the lady







getting seeded. After days, while departing he gave his royal ring on which his name was engraved to Shakuntala saying, "My dearest! I will soon come back and duly marry you with the permission of Sage Kanva. Then we shall go to my capital to live together as king and queen. Till then, bear with the separation period putting trust in our true love. So long."

Dushyanta returned to his capital and his love, Shakuntala began to spend time gazing at and talking to the ring given by him. She kept the ring most of the time buried in her bosom.

It was morning time. Shakuntala sat on a rock in the ashram garden lost in the thoughts of Dushyanta with her eyes fixed on the ring held in her hand. Incidentally, sage Durvasa arrived at the ashram. Shakuntala did not rise up to greet the sage to welcome him in. She did not notice even his presence lost in the thoughts of her lover as she was, dead to the other realities. The sage took it as an affront to him. In deeply upset mood, sage Durvasa put a curse on her, "The one in whose thoughts you forgot your duty shall have no memory of you."

A few days later sage Kanva returned to the ashram. Through the inmates of ashram he learnt that king Dushyanta had stayed in the ashram for some days during his absence. He also got hints about the love affair between him and Shakuntala and the latter getting seeded by Dushyanta.

Sage Kanva felt no joy or anguish. He took it quite equanimously. With a couple of his disciples he sent Shakuntala to the capital of her lover king when he failed to return to take the charge of his beloved as promised even



after several months. On the way, Shakuntala felt thirsty. At a water spring as she tried to take water in the cup of her hand, the Dushyanta ring slipped off her finger and fell into the water. To her horror she saw a fish dart at it, swallow and then was gone.

Poor Shakuntala appeared in the court of Dushyanta without the reminder ring. Under the spell of the curse of Durvasa, he refused to recognise Shakuntala. He infact could recall nothing about his stay at the Kanva ashram. Shakuntala tried her best to remind things about their affair but each time Dushyanta said, "I don't remember any such event. You are telling brazen lies, Don't swindle me."

Now Shakuntala was in deep trouble. She had no face to show up again at Kanva ashram. Where could she go now? In the absence of her foster father she had trusted her love to a stranger and got in deep trouble. She could not squarely blame her lover because she herself was responsible for his losing memory of her. She begged her companions to leave her alone to her fate as she had decided not to return to Kanva ashram. At a lonely spot in the forest she erected a hut and started to live there. There were some tribals nearby for company and help. She made friends with them. With the help of tribal woman she delivered a male child. 'Bharat' was the name given to the child. Bharat was a very promising boy.

On the other side, the fish that had swallowed the Dushyanta ring got caught in the net of a fisherman who used to supply fish to the royal kitchen. As the fisherman cut open the belly of the fish to clean it from inside before supplying, a shiny ring fell out. The fisherman examined the gold ring and saw it carried the name of the king,



Dushyanta. It frightened him because he could be caught for stealing the royal ring. He went straight to the court and surrendered the ring to the king revealing the story.

As soon as king Dushyanta cast glance at the ring the memories of Shakuntala, his sweet romance with her and his promise came rushing back to his mind. Grief struck him when confidants told him that the lady called Shakuntala had come to his court pleading for acceptance but he had turned her away refusing to recognise her. Dushyanta cursed himself and wondered where his love presently could be and in what state?

It felt like an agony. Now he realised how much he loved her.

Dushyanta got the chariot at once readied and set out in search of his love. He went to the Kanva ashram and learnt she never returned there. He went back to the spot where the disciples of the Kanva had left her. He explored the nearby areas. It took him months before he at last reached the tribal hutments, in the vicinity of which Shakuntala lived with her growing son in a hut like a common forest dweller.

King Dushyanta found out the hut of his love. He saw Bharat playing some distance off the hut. The game Bharat was at stunned the king. The boy was counting the teeth of a lion cub having forced opened its jaws with his small hands. It was incredible. He wished to know the boy's blood line.

Dushyanta asked the child who his parents were. The boy revealed he was Bharat, the son of Shakuntala and some king called Dushyanta was supposed to be his father. He hugged the boy with tears running off his eyes.

Then, he ran to the hut in ecstatic mood. As soon as



Shakuntala and Dushyanta saw each other they could not help running into each other's arms. King Dushyanta took his son and beloved to his capital with great fanfare and married his love in royal style. Bharat was made Crown Prince.

After ruling for a long time Dushyanta put Bharat on the throne and retired to the forest. Bharat was a great king and our country is named after him. Thus, nothing more is required to illustrate how great he was. As long as our country is there his name will be there.



## 20

## JADBHARATA TALE

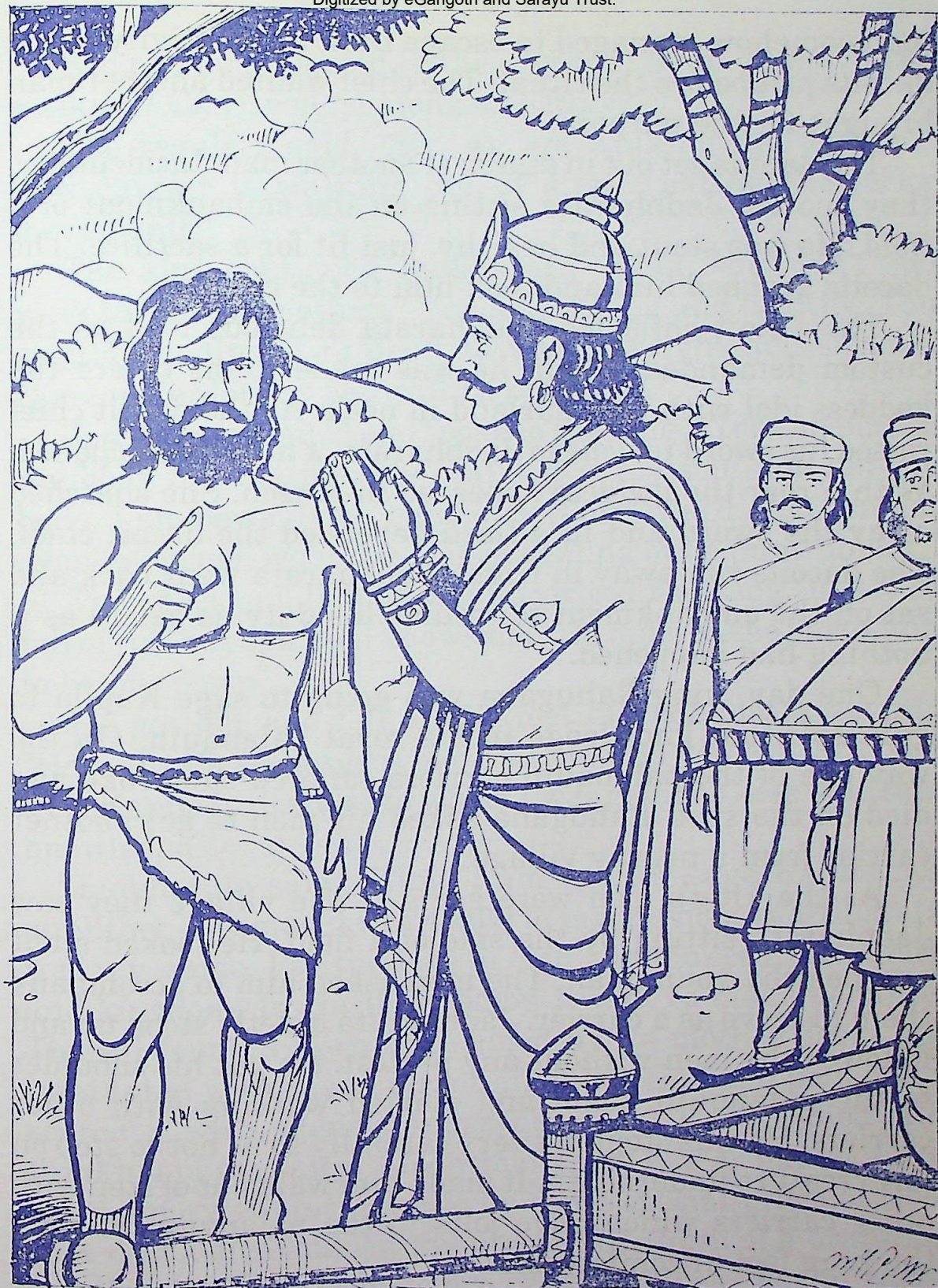
Royal sage Bharata got the body of brahmin when he gave up the deer life. Even in the life of brahmin he retained memory about his previous life and the events. He knew how he had suffered due to infatuation. To prevent any infatuation take root in him he decided to take precaution. In the present life he began to behave like a crazy person to dispel others. The family members thought they had an odd one amongst them. They called him 'Jadbharata' literally meaning 'Deadbrain-Bharata'. His father wanted to make him a scholarly character but he could not progress beyond alphabets. The father thought his son was a real dead-brain, an idiot. After the death of the father, his mother too followed him soon. Now he had only brothers and their ill tempered wives in the family. They ill treated him. Poor Jadbharata did odd labour jobs and lived on whatever wages he earned. He slept wherever he found enough space to sprawl on.

For him joy or sorrow and respect or insult made no difference.

When the brothers saw that due to his coolie status the people were becoming disrespectful to their family they put him at the task of tending their fields. Now Jadbharata would sit on the embankments of the fields and guard the crops all day long. Physically he was stout and healthy.

Meanwhile, a dacoit chief was going to offer human sacrifice to goddess Bhadrakali to beget a son. The sacrificial







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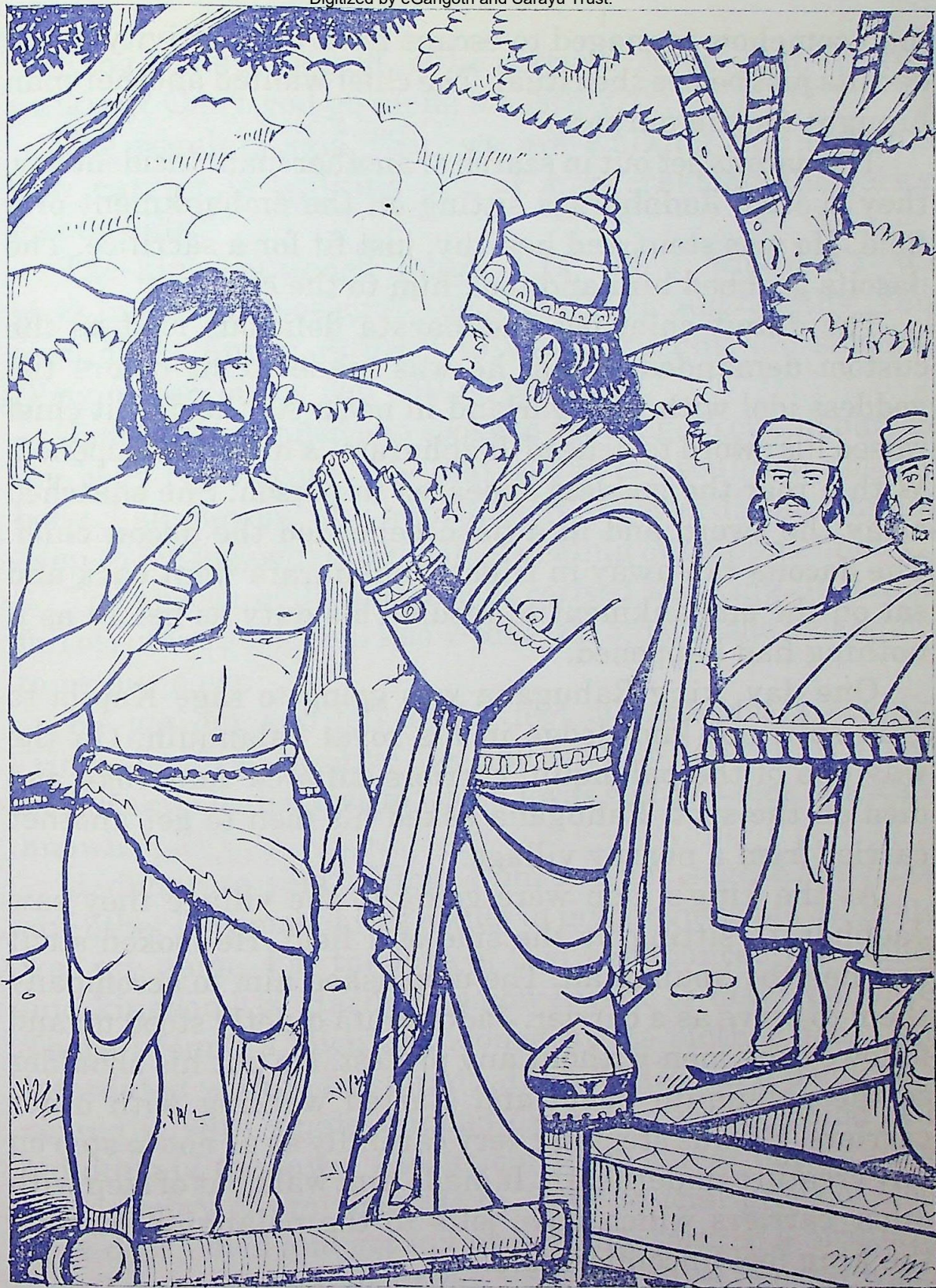
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man somehow managed to escape from the captivity of the dacoits just before the ritual. The chief wanted another man brought for the purpose.

The dacoits set out in search of another man. Incidentally, they spotted Jadbharata sitting on the embankment of a field. He was stout and healthy, just fit for a sacrifice. The dacoits grabbed him and took him to the chief.

The dacoit chief fed Jadbharata delicious food as the custom demanded. Then, he was made to sit before the goddess idol with holy garland in neck. As the dacoit chief raised his sword to behead Jadbharata, a miracle happened. With a roar the goddess appeared in person. She snatched away the sword and in a flash beheaded the dacoit chief. The dacoits ran away in fright. Jadbharata went back and sat on the embankment to resume his duty as before as if nothing had happened.

One day, king Rahugana was going to sage Kapila to gain spiritual knowledge in his royal palanquin. On the way one of the palanquin carriers suffered sunstroke and died on the spot. Rahugana asked his men to get another carrier from a nearby village.

As the king's men were going to the village they saw Jadbharata sitting by the side of a field. He looked stout and healthy youngman. The men asked him to accompany them to serve as a carrier. Jadbharata quietly stood up and followed the men without any protest. He put his shoulder to the palanquin beam and started walking with other carriers. He was stepping very carefully so as not to step on any creature underneath. It made him walk out of step with other carriers which gave jolts to the palanquin making the king feel uncomfortable.



King Rahugana said to the carriers, "Men, how are you walking? Can't you go along smoothly?"

The regulars said, "Sir, we are walking fine but this new carrier is walking out of step creating the jerky movements."

The king cautioned Jadbharata, "Man, why don't you walk in step with others? You look strong and healthy. You should not find it difficult to walk straight and smooth. Obey my orders or you will be punished."

Jadbharata smiled and spoke to the king, "You can punish my body but not me. My real self is my soul and not my body. I am beyond any punishment or reward. You can not even touch me, what to speak of dealing out a punishment."

The speech of Jadbharata surprised the king. It felt so full of sublime spiritual knowledge. He ordered the palanquin to be put down.

He got out and fell at the feet of Jadbharata saying, "Holy sir! Please forgive me. Tell me who you are? Are you sage Kapila in disguise to whom I was going to seek spiritual knowledge?"

Jadbharata said, "King! I am neither sage Kapila nor any other holy man. I was a king in my previous life. Bharata was my name. For the love of God I renounced my palace and kingdom. In Harihar region I went to make penance. There I found a fawn abandoned by its mother doe. I got infatuated with it and forgot all about God and penance. I reared it with single minded devotion. Then, I died still thinking of the fawn. I took rebirth as a deer but retained the memory of previous life by some special grace of God. As a deer I died and got my present life form of a brahmin. I still remembered about my previous lives. Not to waste



this life I do not reveal my reality to the family and other people. My mind remains vested in the thoughts of Almighty Lord and I don't remain conscious of my physical state. In my divine world there is no king, no subjects, no rich, no poor, no impoverished, no overweight, no human and no beast or other creature. All are just souls connected to the Soul Supreme. King, one must seek only God. That is the purpose and the sole meaning of life. It is the most sublime knowledge and the greatest faith."

The sermon of Jadbharata overwhelmed Rahugana. He prayed, "O knowledge Sublime! Let me join your fold. Make me your disciple."

Jadbharata spoke, "King, you are what I am. There is no guru and no disciple. All are just souls. It is the sole truth. Just know it."

As long as Jadbharata lived he continued to give spiritual knowledge to others by word and example. His end hour came and he peacefully went to eternal sleep. In Soul Supreme he got assimilated and became part of the ultimate truth. One who knows the soul knowledge he gains eternal joy and peace.



## 21

## IN LAP OF DEVAHOOTI

Long time ago in the early period of universe, there was a great sage named Kardama. He had read all the divine scriptures. He was an ardent devotee of Lord in whose thoughts he ever remained beamed. He was an embodiment of devotion.

Lord was propitiated by his piety and true faith. One day, He materialised before him to say, "Sage! Your love and devotion has overwhelmed me. I will take incarnation as your son. By imparting to you the divine knowledge I intend to immortalise you and your wife."

Sage Kardama lay prostrate at the feet of Lord. With tears of joy in his eyes he spoke, "Lord! The grace you shower on me is too great for me to understand or correctly realise. But my Lord, you know that I have no wife and I am resolved not to marry ever."

Lord said smiling, "Sage, I know that. For my sake you shall marry. The one who has accepted you as her husband shall herself come to you. Accept her as your wife. Out of her womb I shall take birth. It shall happen."

Lord disappeared after booning the sage. Kardama again lost himself in meditation and penance making. Anxiously he waited for the day when Lord would arrive as his son in his ashram abode.

Months went by. It was the morning of the full moon day of Falguna month. Kardama had just finished his







morning prayers when Manu and his wife Shatroopa arrived with their daughter, Devahooti.

Kardama welcomed his guests and got them beseated. After formal talk of health and weather he asked of his guests, "Sage Manu! Would you reveal why I am being honoured with your visit?"

Manu said, "Holy sir! Your qualities and fame as a chosen one of Lord has made our daughter Devahooti accept you as her husband. We have come to your abode to hand her over to you."

Sage Kardama then recalled the words of Lord that the one who would accept him as her husband would herself come to him. He was commanded by Lord to accept her as his wife. So, that was it! thought he. He cast a glance at his would-be wife.

She sat there with her head bent down. She was a picture of piety and trustworthiness. He was elated. He turned to Manu and said, "Divine sir, I accept Devahooti as my wife. I feel honoured."

Manu and his wife went away leaving Devahooti at the ashram of Kardama. The two began to live like husband and wife after a simple ceremony of marriage.

One after another, Devahooti bore Kardama nine daughters over a decade. The ashram was now full of din created by the kids. Kardama again began to yearn for the peace of meditation. Disenchanted he had become. He prepared to leave his ashram abode to go to a lonely and peaceful place to make penance. His wife pleaded, "Master! You are going away and who would raise these nine girls? Who would look for grooms for them? You are my only joy of life and support. How shall I carry on with life after you



are gone? We shall all become orphans.”

The sage said, “Devahooti! You are not an ordinary woman. You are the best in womanhood. The time has come when Lord himself would arrive from your womb. His name would be ‘Kapila’. He would impart to you the divine knowledge to salvage your life. I will not renunciate till his arrival.”

Kardama consoled her in that way. To show her the cosmic truth he created a divine craft through his yogamaya. To his wife he spoke, “Devahooti! I bless you with divine sight. Sit with me in this craft and let me take you on a cosmic tour.”

Devahooti obeyed and sat in the craft. It took off. With the divine sight blessed to her by Kardama she saw incredible cosmic scenes and amazing phenomena. She had never seen such sights.

After the cosmic tour Kardama said to her in a very gentle tone, “Dear Devahooti! What you saw was like a dream, a living illusion. Just like a dream ends all these worlds and cosmic phenomena would vanish one day. The only thing that is eternal is the love and the devotion to Lord. Hence, you must forget about all the worries and the mundane cares and invest your thoughts in Lord and worship Him. Don’t waste time in other exercises.”

It changed the mind of Devahooti and she dedicated herself to the devotion to Lord.

At last, Lord arrived as her son Kapila to adorn her motherly lap. After the birth of Kapila, Sage Kardama renunciated and retired to a deserted forest where he meditated and made penance.

Lord incarnate Kapila decided to go to the forest at a



very early age. Before departing he said to his mother, "Infatuation in virtual woe and begetter of more woes. More there is infatuation the more are the woes and miseries for one to suffer. The true path is to banish all attachments and desires. Devotion to Lord is the only path to peace and eternal joy. The more intense devotion one creates to Lord the more peace he gets."

After revealing true knowledge to his mother, Kapila went to the place where today there is the Bay of Bengal touching the delta of Ganga. The wisdom of Kapila treasured in scriptures shed light on the divine path even today. And so it will in future too.



## 22

**SAHASRABAHU & PARASHURAMA**

Kartvirya Arjuna of Haihaya dynasty was a valiant and very illustrious king. To please his guru Dattatreya he had gained one thousand arms from him. Because of his 1000 arms he was also known as Sahasrabahu. He prided over his power and splendour. Once he was bathing in Narmada river with a garland in his neck. Just for fun he had spread his arms and blocked the flow of the river water.

Incidentally the lord of Lanka was also having a swim in the river at the same time. To him the act of Sahasrabahu appeared improper and unjust. He too prided over his power. So, he went to Sahasrabahu and soundly rebuked him. Sahasrabahu did not like his bad mouthing. In no time Sahasrabahu overpowered Ravana and took him prisoner.

Ravana was put in the prison. But Sage Pulastya intervened and got Ravana released taking pity on him. But Ravana did not give up his arrogant ways, He continued to torment sages, scholars, holymen and nobles. On the other hand Sahasrabahu also was bursting with inflated ego. Once he went hunting to the forest where there was the ashram of Sage Jamdagni, the sire of Parashurama. With his soldiers Sahasrabahu entered the ashram.

With the help of his wish granting cow Kamadhenu the sage gave a feast to the royal guests. The magical powers of Kamadhenu amazed Sahasrabahu. From the sage he demanded the miracle cow on the reasoning that the king







had better uses of such cow for general welfare. But Jamdagni would not part with the cow because it was the sole support of entire ashram population. Sahasrabahu ordered his soldiers to take away the cow forcibly.

Thus, Kamadhenu got dragged away by the king's men. Parshurama was not present in the ashram. When he returned to the ashram the sage told him how king Sahasrabahu had taken away the cow by force. The news sent the blood of Parashurama boiling in anger. He took his pick axe and stormed towards Mahishmati where king Sahasrabahu lived in his palace.

Parashurama caught up with the king and his soldiers before they could reach the capital. Sahasrabahu saw Parashurama coming. To face him he got his soldiers take positions. Now Parashurama was facing thousands of the soldiers of the king, Sahasrabahu. But Parashurama would not care. He was an one man army.

A fierce battle broke out and he vanquished the enemy army.

Then Sahasrabahu himself came to battle. With his thousand arms he rained arrows at Parshurama. The latter cut down all the arrows with his two hands. Now Sahasrabahu uprooted a tree and ran at Parshurama with it. With his arrows Parashurama cut the tree to bits and pieces before his enemy could toss it at him. The last of his arrows went through the head of Sahasrabahu who fell to the ground dead.

Parashurama returned to his father with the cow Kamadhenu. The restoration of the cow extremely pleased Sage Jamdagni. He embraced his son overwhelmed with affection. Parashurama had a great reverence for his sire



who was like God to him. Jamdagni was an accomplished sage and a master of many yogic powers.

One morning, it was the worship hour of the sage. His wife Renuka had gone to the lake to fetch water for his bath before his worship exercise. Incidentally, a Yaksha was engaged in water sports at the lake with his beautiful women. Fascinated by the engaging scene of romantic water sport Renuka lost track of time.

Thus, she got delayed.

When she realised she was already too late. She ran to the ashram with the pitcher of water. She apologised for the delay. Through his yogic insight the sage knew the cause of her delay. She had indulged in impious act of voyeurism. It angered the sage. He asked his sons to behead their sinful mother. No son obeyed except Parashurama. In response to his father's command he beheaded his mother and disobedient brothers without any second thought.

His obedience pleased the mystical father. He told his son to ask for a boon as his reward. Parashurama prayed, "Revered father! If you are really pleased with me then revive my mother and all the brothers."

Sage Jamdagni revived them all.

The return of Kamadhenu had pleased the sage but at the same time he regretted the killing of Sahasrabahu. Looking hard at Parashurama, the sage said, "Son, killing king Sahasrabahu was a wrong act on your part. We brahmins must be forgiving. Angst is not our thing. We are rated highest because of our forgiveness. A king is like a brahmin. In Sahasrabahu you have killed a brahmin. To cleanse this grave sin you must go to pilgrimages for one whole year."



Obeying the wish of his father, Parashurama set out on pilgrimage after receiving the blessings of his father.

Meanwhile, the sons of Sahasrabahu were waiting for an opportunity to avenge the death of their father.

One day, in the absence of Parashurama and his brothers they arrived at the ashram. Sage Jamdagni was sitting in meditation. The sons of Sahasrabahu beheaded the sage and took away his head. Renuka wailed bitterly mourning the death of her husband.

Coincidentally Parashurama returned soon after. He heard from his mother how mercilessly his father was butchered. In raging fury Parashurama ran towards Mahishmati with his pick axe. He was rattling his pick axe in revengeful mood. He went on such a rampage that all the sons of Sahasrabahu got hacked to death. He killed others too and ground Mahishmati to dust and rubble.

Parashurama got the head of his father and gave it to his mother. With it in her lap she sat on the funeral pyre and became sati.

After this incident Parashurama cleaned the earth of Kshatriyas (martial caste) 21 times. At last, Lord Rama cooled down his anger and he went to the forest to make penance. Parashurama is a legend for his valour and intrepidity.



## 23

## KRISHNA IN VRINDAVANA

All around Vrindavana the nature had generously worked its beauty. There were trees laden with flowers of myriad colours and fruits that looked like eye candies. Groups and crystal clear water bodies shimmered like gems in a vast tapestry. The groves were homes of colourful singing birds that added life to the scene. On one side of Vrindavana stood Govardhana mount and on the other river Yamuna flowed by. It looked as if the nature had set a stage for a divine play.

Every morning kid Krishna used to go to the forest pastures to graze the cattle accompanied by other cowherd kids. They would take along noon-meals tied in their shoulder napkins. The cowherd kids remained in the forest all day long. They used to play several kid games and the time would just fly like a bird. The kids returned only at evening hours. With their return the village used to come alive after day long silence of the graveyard.

On that day it was just before noon time. Krishna was playing a game under a Kadamba tree. All was peacefully quite. Suddenly, Krishna happened to see the grazing group of calves. Amongst them there was an odd one. Infact, it was not a calf at all but a demon trying to look like a real calf with his demonic illusion trick. The demon was there to do some harm to Krishna and was looking for an opportunity. Vatsasura was its name.







Krishna recognised it at once. Nothing could escape the notice of Krishna's divine insight. He rose and walked towards the demonic calf as soon as he saw through the trick. Getting close to it he grabbed the calf by its neck with left hand and hit it hard in the belly by right hand. That one charge was enough to make Vatsasura's tongue hang out grotesquely. The calf came back into its real demonic form and fell down dead. Its huge demonic hulk stunned the cowherd kids. They spoke words of admiration for their divine mate. Some shouted slogans hailing Krishna. In the evening when they went home the news of the killing of the demon Vatsasura was fanned out all through the hamlet. The village folk celebrated the end of the Vatsasura menace they had long suffered from. The cowherd gops and gopis would not stop singing the praises of their Krishna.

A few days later, one other incident occurred which was very diabolical. This time a demonic agent of Kansa adopted the form of a crane. Because of the crane form the demon was called Bakasura. (*Bak* in the vernacular language stands for crane).

Again it was noon time. Krishna had taken his noon meals and was resting under a tree. The cows were grazing in front of him. Some cowherd kids went to the river to drink water. They saw a strange bird there that frightened them. It was a crane but its beak was like jaws of crocodile. The head was also abnormal.

The screams of cowherd kids brought Krishna on the run to the river bank. He came and had a very careful look at the creature. It was sitting budded in the water with its crocodial beak and big bulging eyes clearly out of water looking grotesque. Krishna knew it was no crane but a



demon. He acted fast. In an electrifying move Krishna lunged at the demonic crane and grabbed its neck. A few twists to it with both hands brought its eyes popping out. In demonic shape it at once transformed and collapsed to die with a few flip-flops.

The sight of the dead demon frightened the cowherd boys. And the way Krishna dealt death to it was still more amazing. For them Krishna had become a God who could do anything. At night, in the village the kids revealed to the people how their mate Krishna had disposed off a diabolic demon who tried to fool them as a crane.

The deaths of Vatsasura and Bakasura was a cause for worry for Kansa who had sent them to deal with Krishna. He now knew for certain that Krishna was the prophetic 8th son of Devaki who meant death of Kansa. He decided to send more demons to eliminate Krishna.

Aghasura was the most horrific of them. He was master of disguises and daring. He possessed some sorcery powers also. That day again it was a little before noon time. The cows were grazing hungrily while the cowherd boys played around. Krishna was watching the cows carefully as his sixth sense warned him of some danger lurking around. Suddenly, he realised that he could no more see the cowherd boys. There was none. Only the cows were visible and they no more were grazing. They were lowing in fright as their eyes reflected fear. Krishna went to the cows and called out to his mates. There was no response. There was no trace of them. Where had they gone all of a sudden? Why wasn't anyone replying to his frantic calls?

He moved further. There he came across a very disturbing scene. A great python lay on the path in a haphazard state.



It was breathing heavy, At the sight of Krishna it breathed more heavily.

The python, infact was the demon Aghasura. It had sucked in all the missing cowherd boys through it breathing. It was trying to suck in Krishna as well. But little did the demon know of the divine power of the incarnate boy of Nanda and Yashoda.

Again Krishna quickly realised that he was facing yet another demon in the guise of that python. He guessed his missing mates should be inside the tunnel like stomach of the demonic python. He became alert. The python was still inhaling heavily creating a vacuum effect. Krishna allowed himself to get pulled towards the mouth of the python. Then, in a swift move he grabbed the open jaws of Aghasura python and tore them apart. After that he ran inside its tunnel stomach where he expanded his body to such extent that the python belly burst open. And out came all the missing boys and their cowherd hero Krishna.

Again the cowherds narrated to their respective parents how their mate Krishna had rescued them from the jaws and stomach of a demonic python. The parents heard the tale in stunned silence with their mouths wide open. Nanda and Yashoda blessed their darling Krishna and thanked God for protecting their child.

Such were the spectacles Krishna worked at Vrindavana.



## 24

## STORY OF RANTIDEVA

Bharata the son of Dushyanta had himself sired no son. He had adopted Bhardwaj as his son. Later, in Bhardwaj line Rantideva was born. Although a king, yet he lived like an ascetic. His entire time was spent in religious exercises and acts of sacrifice. His motto was, "Sacrifice yourself for the good and welfare of others". His family and relatives also believed in that philosophy.

In his own life Rantideva was very undemanding. He ate whatever he was given or he found just enough to stay alive. And he wore whatever was available. He saved or amassed nothing. He thought one who saved was stealing food of others.

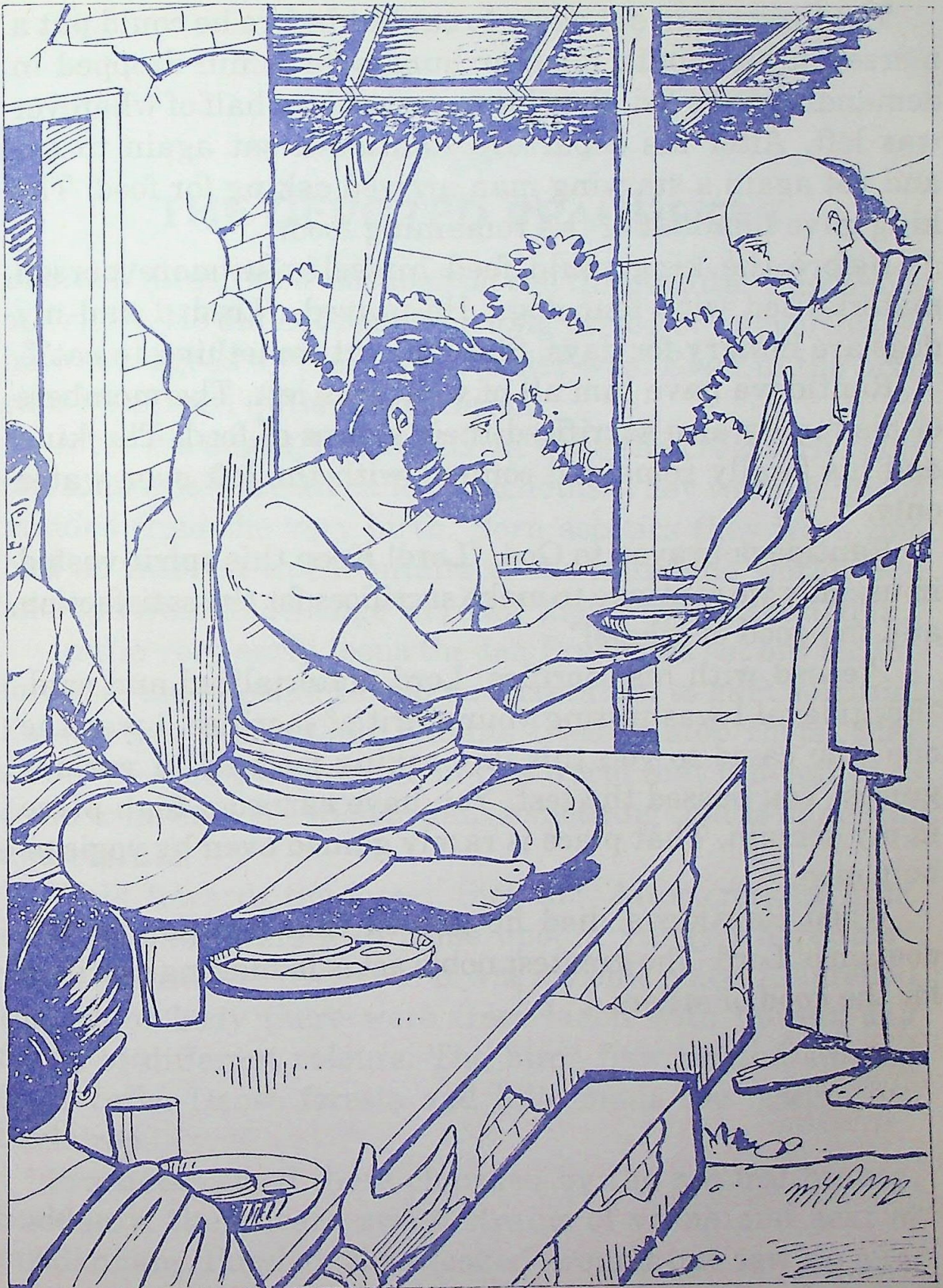
Once Rantideva had to go without food and water for several days. Same was the fate of other members of his family.

No one cried or complained.

At last, he got some food and water after that hungry period. He sat down with his family to eat. Just as he was about to put a morsel in his mouth a brahmin arrived and begged, "King! I have not eaten for days. Please give me something to eat."

Rantideva gave half of his share to the guest. The brahmin ate the food and went away satisfied. It gave great pleasure to the king. The real satisfaction lay in feeding others.







The king again sat down to eat but before he could put a morsel in his mouth another hungry brahmin dropped in demanding to be fed. Rantideva served him half of whatever was left. After his departure Rantideva sat again to eat and yet again a starving man arrived asking for food. The king gave him half of the remaining food.

Before the king could feed himself one more person materialised with four dogs. He prayed, "Lord, I and my dogs are hungry for days. Shall we get something to eat?"

Rantideva gave him all of what was left. The members of his family also sacrificed their shares of food. The king and his family remained content with the left over water only.

Rantideva prayed to God, "Lord! Keep this spirit vested in us. May we continue to make sacrifices for the satisfaction and the good of others!"

Pleased with his sacrifice, Lord materialised and said, "Rantideva! I was testing your spirit of sacrifice. I was the one who came to you this day asking for food in various guises. You passed the test. You have earned a high place in my domain. That place is rarely gained even by yogis or holy men."

When Rantideva died he gained that position in the domain of Lord. The greatest noble act is in making sacrifice for the good of others.



## 25

## THE DEVOTED PRACHETAS

Prince Vijitashwa descended on the throne after the demise of Prithu. He did not rule for a long period but nevertheless he was as good a ruler as his father was. Even in the brief rule he earned quite a reputation.

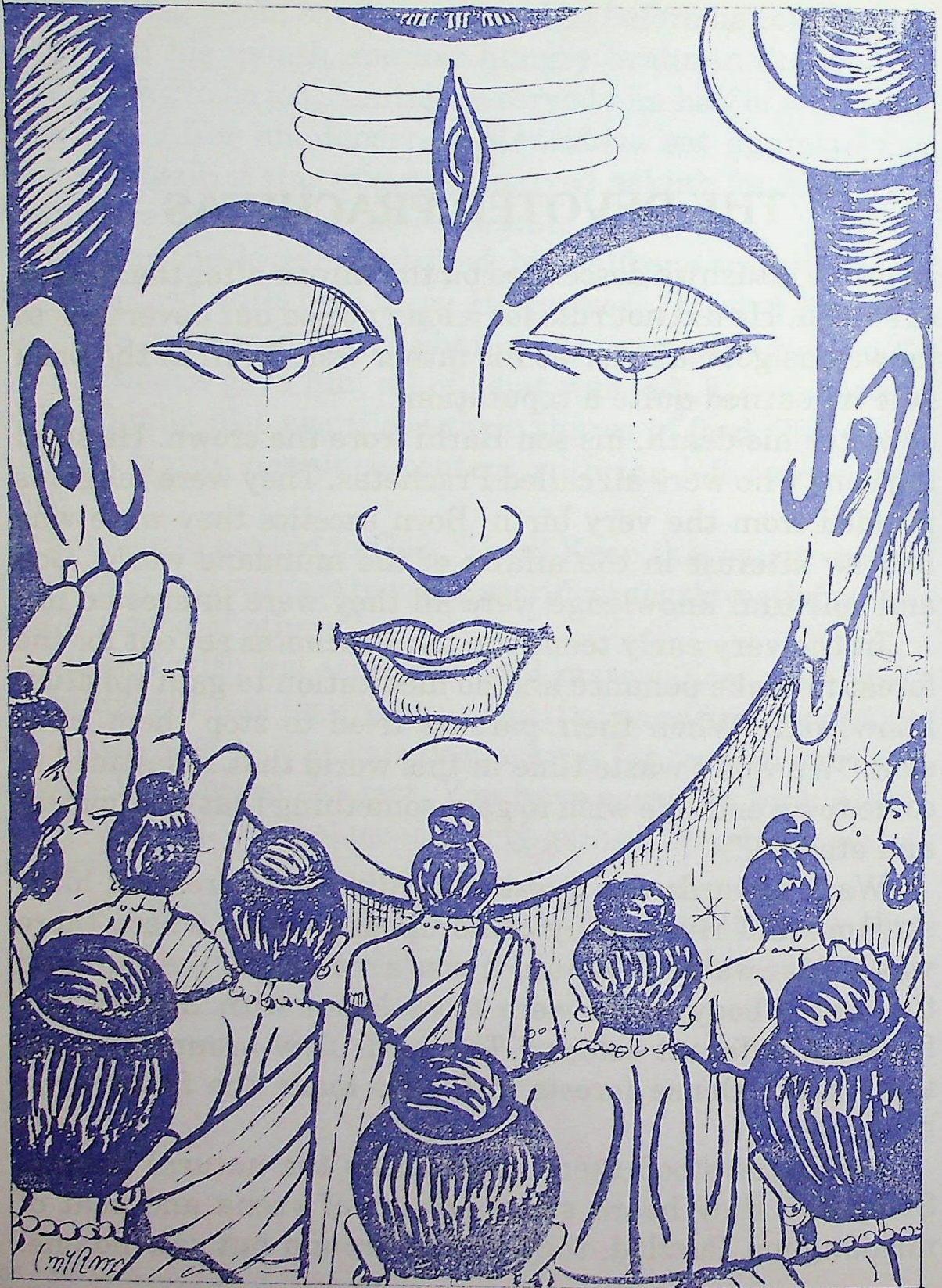
After his death, his son Barhi wore the crown. He sired ten sons who were all called Prachetas. They were religious minded from the very birth. Born ascetics they were who had no interest in the affairs of the mundane world. God and spiritual knowledge were all they were interested in.

In the very early teens the ten Prachetas set out for the forest to make penance and do meditation to gain spiritual knowledge. When their parents tried to stop them, they said, "We won't waste time in this world that is destined to come to an end. We wish to gain something that is immortal and eternal."

Walk towards the forest, they did. After crossing hills, streams and rivers they came upon a valley where there was a clear water reservoir. It was a scenic place. All around the water body there were trees laden with flowers and fruits of different colours. The birds flew around singing their calls. Dense forests and hills made the fascinating backdrop.

Prachetas stood there charmed by the natural beauty. Suddenly, they heard sweet strains of veena and beat of mridangam. Puzzled, they looked around but saw no one.







Prachetas stared at one another in surprise and questions in their eyes. Still baffled all of them were when from the water Lord Shiva emerged. Prachetas made obeisance and prayed, "Lord, blessed are we to have the fortune of seeing you in divine person. We thank you for your grace."

Lord Shiva gladly announced, "Prachetas! We are pleased with you. We also know what your wish is. You shall gain what you seek. I will reveal to you the prayer mantra to invoke Lord Vishnu. Chant it and it will work to fulfil your wish. The prayer is, 'O Lord, salvage our lives by blessing us with devotion to you and faith in you. You are gracious. Please shower your grace on us. We are in your refuge, Lord. You are the life force of universe and the soul reality of every creature. You are the light of our eyes and the voice of our conscience. A body that has no trust in you is a corpse. You are the sole friend of the meek. Grant us the devotion and the sight that may enable us to know you and gain us the knowledge to propitiate you.'"

After revealing the prayer Lord Shiva disappeared.

Prachetas stood in the water waist deep and began to sing the prayer revealed by Shiva. Through heat, rain and storms they carried on the exercise.

The steadfast devotion and the true faith of Prachetas pleased Lord Vishnu who appeared to them to salvage them. Prachetas went to heaven on a special aerial craft,

One who puts true faith in Lord his wishes are fulfilled and a place is earned in the heaven.



## 26

**SLAYING HIRANYAKSHA**

When Hiranyaksha and Hiranyakashipu were born as twins from the womb of Diti, the earth trembled. The stars and constellations changed positions to be in a new unfavourable configuration. The storm blow and tides rose in the seas.

Instantly, after birth Hiranyaksha and Hiranyakashipu grew up into giant demons. They began to torment others and wreaked havoc. The two were incredibly powerful but they were not satisfied. They wanted to be invincible and immortal.

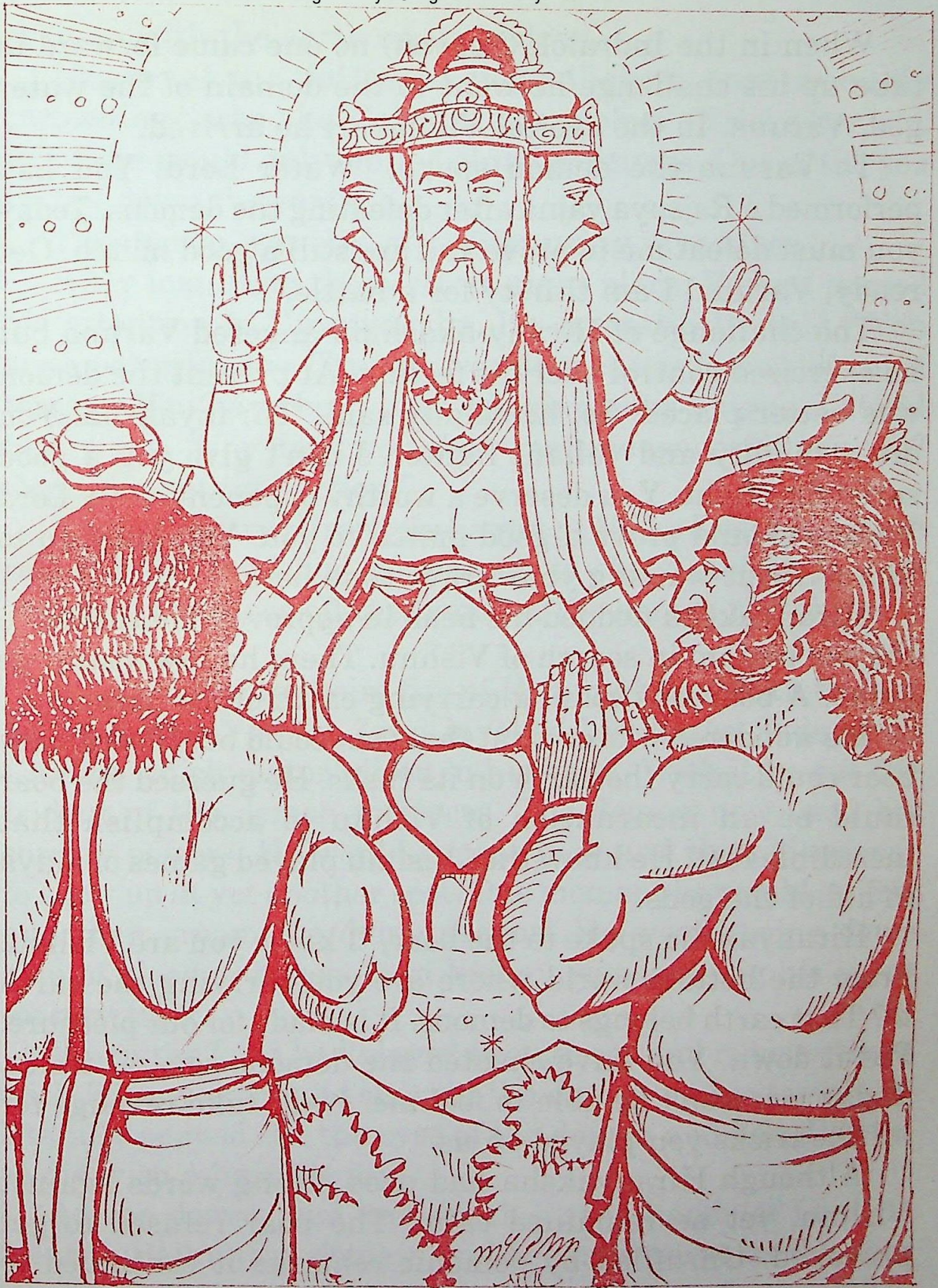
So, to propitiate Brahma the demon duo made a penance of great value. Brahma duly was pleased. He appeared to them and said, "Your devotion has impressed us. Ask for a boon."

The demons spoke, "Lord! Give us a boon to be invincible and immortal."

Brahma granted the wish and went back.

After getting the boons the elder demon Hiranyaksha became dictatorial and extremely arrogant. He was the king of demons who considered himself to be the real lord of the universe. Even Lord Vishnu was considered by him to be inferior to him. He made up his mind to conquer all the three worlds. With his great mace in hand he stormed into the heavenly domain. Hearing about his arrival the gods fled. And in no time heaven was in the total control of the demon lord.







When in the Indralok (heaven) no one came forward to take up his challenge he went to the domain of the water god, Varuna. In the capital Vibhavari he arrived.

To Varuna the demon spoke, "Water Lord! You had performed a Rajsuya yajna after defeating the demons. Today you must defeat me to prove you are still a good match. Get ready, Varuna! I am thirsty for a battle."

The challenge of Hirany-akashipu angered Varuna but he exercised control over his feeling. At present the demon was better placed. So, he calmly said, "Hiranyaksha! You are a mighty and valiant fighter. I can't give you a good satisfying fight. You deserve a worthy opponent. Only Lord Vishnu should prove a good match to you. You must go to him without wasting your brave time here."

Hiranyaksha nodded his head in approval. He rushed to the sea bottom in search of Vishnu. There he saw a strange scene. A boar was coming carrying earth on its tusks.

He wondered who or what that boar could be? No ordinary boar could carry the earth on its tusks. He guessed the boar could be an incarnation of Vishnu to accomplish that incredible feat. He knew that Vishnu played games of maya in aid of the gods.

Hiranyaksha spoke to the boar, "I know you are Vishnu. From the bottom world where are you carrying the earth to? That earth belongs to demons. It is made for our pleasure. Put it down. You have cheated the demons several times. Today you won't be able to fool me. I will take revenge for all the tricks you played on us."

Although Hiranyaksha had used strong words against Vishnu, yet he remained calm. The boar refused to get provoked. Unruffled by demonic remarks it continued to



rush on with the earth on its tusks.

Hiranyaksha followed boar-Vishnu continuously throwing barbs like 'Coward', 'Shameless', 'Trickester' etc. But Lord would only smile behind his tusks. Out of the sea he put down the earth.

The demon was still after him using invectives.

After installing the earth in right place, Vishnu turned his attention to Hiranyaksha. He sarcastically said, "You are a powerful one. Truly powerful ones use force instead of tongue. You have been only wagging your tongue. I stand before you. Why don't you show me how powerful you are? Come on, get into action."

Raging in fury Hiranyaksha ran at Vishnu with his mace raised high. Lord had no weapon to show. Acting fast he snatched the mace off the hands of the demon and threw it away.

It added fuel to their fire of Hiranyaksha. With trident he lunged at Vishnu. Lord invoked his divine Sudarshan Chakra which materialised in his hand. With it he cut the trident of the demon to pieces. The demon now used his sorcery powers. He would appear here and then disappear to show up at yet another spot. One moment he would guffaw and then groan like dying dragon. He would bring down rain of blood or bones. Lord Vishnu was undoing his every sorcery trick.

When the Lord had played enough cat and mouse games with Hiranyaksha, he slapped the demon on his temple. It literally popped out the eyes of the demon and he collapsed to die with a horrible cry.

As the demon had met death at the hands of Lord he went to Baikuntha domain and began to serve as the door



guard of Lord's chamber.

Love or enmity both for Lord earns noble rewards. One who loves him he goes to his domain as reward. And one who is hostile to Lord goes there as punishment. So equanimous is the mind of Lord.

He is beyond all differences and discriminations.



## 27

**DEER LOVE OF BHARATA**

After the departure of Rishabhadeva to the forest his son Bharata took the reins of the state in his hands. He married Panchajali and sired several sons. Of them Nahusha was valiant and illustrious who once raided the heaven and defeated Indra in battle.

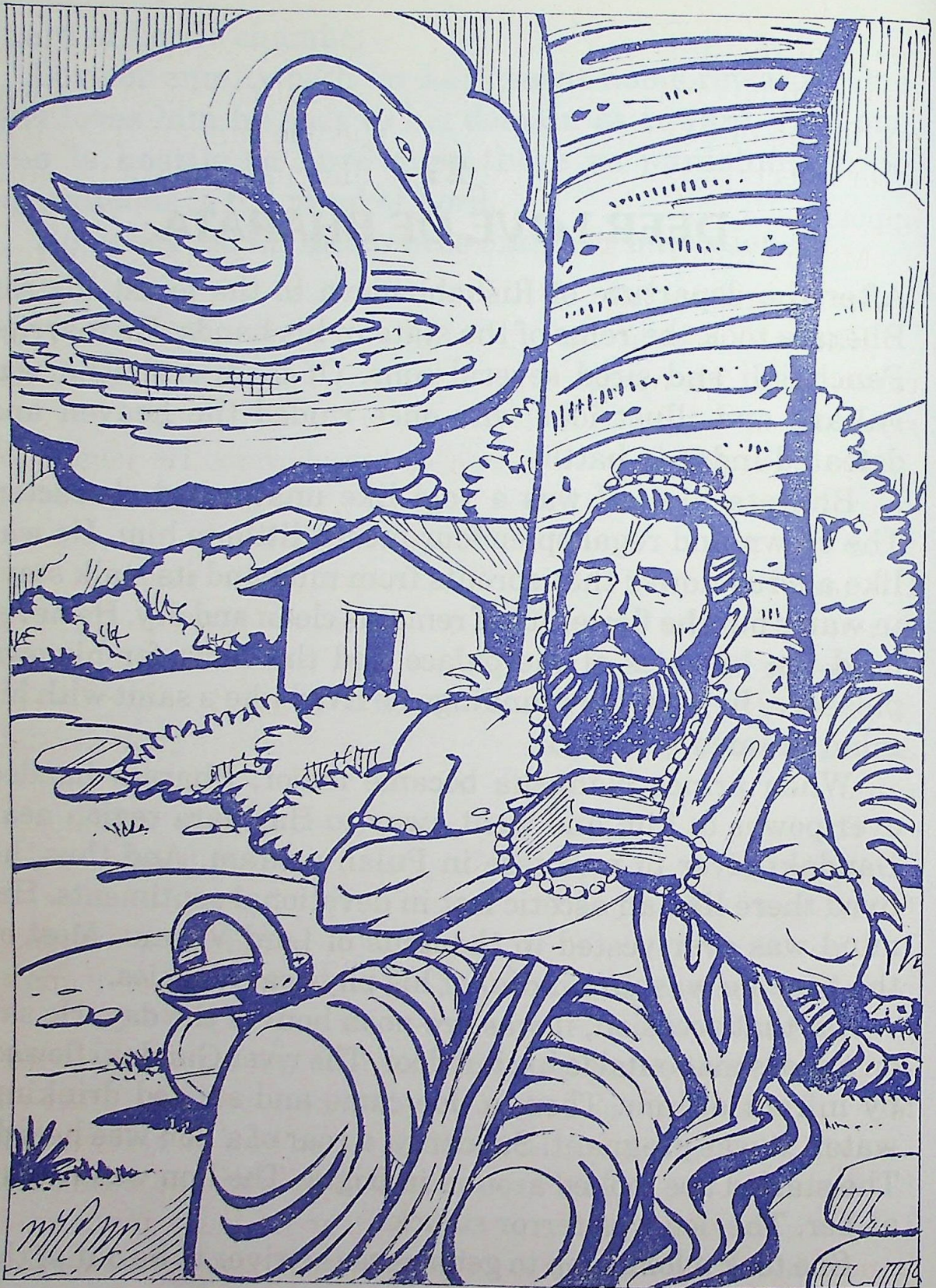
Bharata himself was a yogi like unattached character. The crown and regal splendour meant little to him. He was like a lotus flower that sprouts from mud and its stalk stays in water but the flower itself remains clean and dry. He never used the luxuries of the palace and the court for his own pleasure. In royal surroundings he lived like a saint with his mind beamed into God.

When prince Nahusha became major, Bharata handed over power to him and went away to Harihara region near Gandaki river to meditate in Pulah ashram. And thus, he lived there like an ascetic lost in devotional sentiments. His mind was ever vested in thoughts of Lord Vishnu. Most of the time he was unmindful of his physical realities.

On that occasion, it was pre-noon hour of the day. He sat on a grass mat outside his hut door. The river Gandaki flowed by in front of him. Then, a doe came and started drinking water. It was pregnant. Suddenly, a roar of a lion was heard. The startled doe looked around in fright. The lion was racing at her. The doe was terror struck.

She took a long leap to get across the river to be out of the







reach of the predator. Jumping off without a purchase run took a huge effort. She landed across but the unborn fawn got forced out to fall in the river. The doe ran suffering the after effects of the miscarriage and died in a cave of the hill opposite.

Meanwhile, the prematurely born fawn struggled in the water to save its life.

Bharata saw it and he was seized by the feeling of compassion. He ran and jumped into the river. The fawn was rescued.

Bharata brought the fawn to his ashram. He began to rear it up as his own child. God, for whom he gave up his kingdom, throne and family was a forgotten subject now. His mind and heart were all concentrated on the fawn. He forgot about the penance making and meditation. Care of the young fawn was his sole concern now. Bharata got so infatuated with the little cute creature that all other matters and subjects did not exist for him. He had become an irrational mind.

The fawn was still a baby when the last hour of Bharata arrived. He died worrying about what would beome of the fawn after he was gone?

The fawn obsession got him the life of a deer in his next birth. One begets same life form one dies thinking of in one's previous life.

Even after getting born as a young one of a doe he carried forward the memories of previous life. May be, some grace of God still was shining on him. He regretted how he had wasted his Bharata life in infatuation of a fawn and had banished Lord Vishnu from his mind. As a deer he led a pious and honest life. After the death of deer form he was born as a son



of a brahmin and became famous as Jadbharata, whose story has already been told.

Like Bharata everyone has to take various life forms according to one's *Karma* and live its consequences.



## 28

**KALYAVANA & JARASANDHA**

The king of Magadha, Jarasandha raided the town of Mathura seventeen times but could never achieve full victory and total control of the town of Krishna and Balrama. He kept up trying to ruin the town. During that period yonder the north-west frontier of India there was an alien ruler called Kalyavana. He was a non-believer and very tyrannical ruler. He had a large force. Jarasandha was his friend.

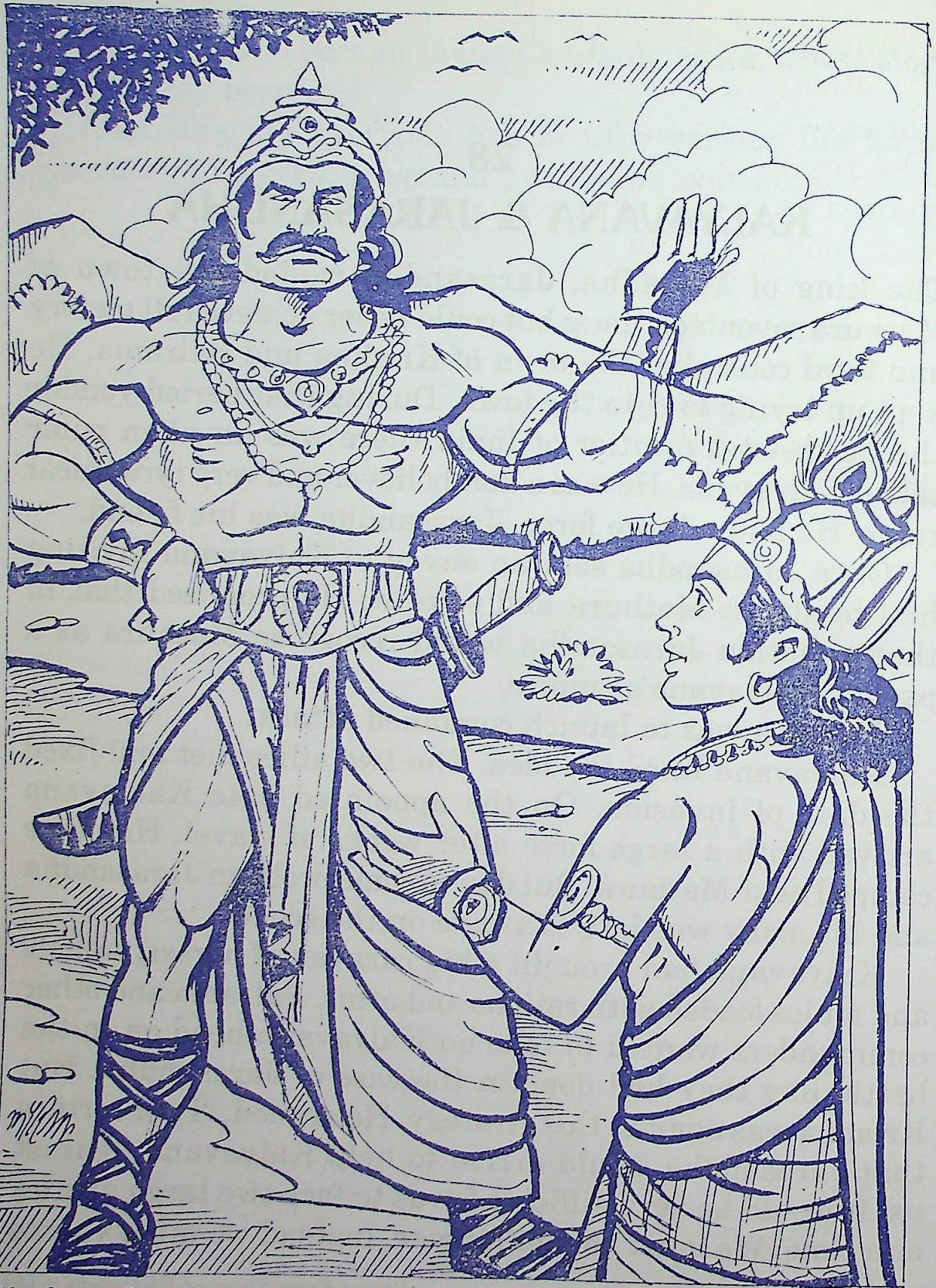
Once Jarasandha sent an envoy to Kalyavana inviting him to attack Mathura and seize it. He promised that in that situation Jarasandha would recognise Mathura as a part of Kalyavana's empire.

The idea was to launch combined attack.

Kalyavana liked the idea. The two allies met and fixed the date of invasion. On the appointed date Kalyavana arrived with a large force after weeks of travel. His force camped near Mathura. But due to some problem Jarasandha and his army was late to arrive on the scene.

Kalyavana had brought a big caravan of horses, camels and mules loaded with rations and arms. Balrama and other commanders wanted to take on Kalyavana head on in the battle like they had done in the case of Jarasandha. But Krishna was against this strategy. He argued, "I am certain that Jarasandha would arrive to help Kalyavana against us. It would be very difficult for us to face two large armies at a time. We must not opt for war. Instead we must vacate







Mathura to save it from destruction.”

Although Balrama, Ugrasena and other commanders did not agree, yet Krishna prevailed upon them and his plan was finally accepted. Accordingly the Yadavas quietly slipped away at night and vacated Mathura. It was a ghost town now. After the vacaton of Mathura Krishna said to Balrama, “Brother, I will go alone to deal with Kalyavana. I have a plan. Do not go from Mathura until I return.”

It was the morning time. The sun had come up.

With a flower garland in his neck he appeared at the camp of Kalyavana. He was bare handed and was carrying no weapons. Kalyavana was surprised to see him. He sized up Krishna and stared at the glowing blue skin of the native royal. He guessed it could be the legendary Krishna he had heard much about. Magnificent blue was his colour and he wore a garland. And above all he had a peacock feather in crown, his trademark symbol. He noticed that Krishna was unarmed. So he to decided to deal with him without the help of weapons to show that he belonged to a civilised land.

Kalyavana asked, “Who are you? Are you Krishna?”

“Yes, I am Krishna. Tell me what do you want?”

In reply Kalyavana ran at Krishna who did not stand to meet the challenge. According to his plan he fled. Kalyavana pursued him.

The chase took them into a mountain. There, Krishna ran into a cave. Kalyavana stopped at the mouth of the cave to think. Deciding to trap Krishna in the cave he too went in cautiously. Deep inside a figure lay asleep covered with a shawl. Kalyavana took it for Krishna.

Kalyavana, meanwhile thought Krishna had hid himself under the cover of shawl frightened of him. With contempt



he kicked the sleeping figure screaming, "Coward! You flee and hide here under a shaw?"

The sleeping figure removed the shawl off his face in seething anger. His one glance burnt Kalyavana to ashes. The sleeper was a great warrior sage named Muchukunda. Son of Mandati, he was. Once he had helped gods in their war against the demons. The grateful gods had booned him to be asleep in peace. Infact, in the war he was so tired at the end that when gods asked him to spell his wish he just said he only wanted to sleep. Anyone disturbing his sleep was to get burnt to death at his angry glance. Clever Krishna knew the story. Krishna blessed Muchukunda and granted him a place in heaven.

Krishna then returned to Mathura. The news of the death of Kalyavana demoralised his army and it fled. Yadavas wanted to go in the hunt of the fleeing enemy. But Krishna stopped them, "Forget about Kalyavana army. Jarasandha is on his way to Mathura. We must clear out without delay."

All the Yadavas of Mathura migrated to western coast. There Krishna founded a new capital called Dwarka and established an empire. Krishna earned glory as the Lord of Dwarka and created many legends.



## 29

**ENLIGHTENMENT OF YAYATI**

Vishwamitra was born in warrior caste (Kshatriya) but by dint of penance he had gained the position of Brahmarshi, which was generally reserved for ones born in brahmin caste, Nothing is impossible for a determined person.

In the blood line of Vishwamitra, there was a great king called Nahusha. He was matchless in valour and daring. He had raided heaven and extended his rule over it. But his weakness for female beauty had led to a situation where sages had to put a curse on him to turn him into a dragon.

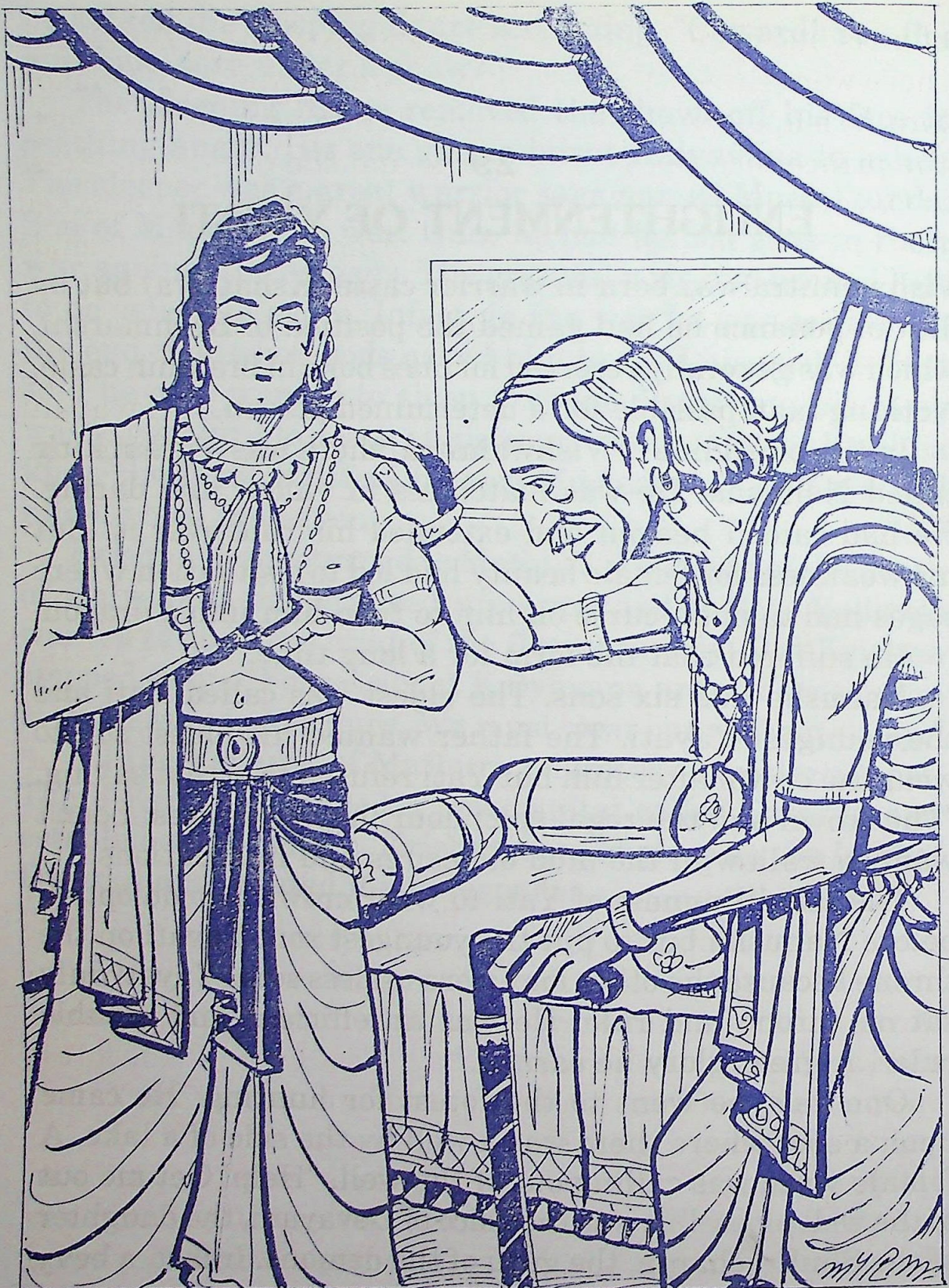
He suffered that life form for a long time.

Nahusha had six sons. The eldest was called Yati and the youngest Yayati. The father wanted his eldest son to wear the crown after him but Yati refused to accept saying, "The crown and the regal splendour inspire desires. I don't want to wallow in the mud of desires and infatuations."

The unwillingness of Yati to wear crown left no option before Nahusha but to put the youngest son, Yayati on the throne because the other four were useless sons. Yayati duly sat on throne and rule. He was an efficient and capable ruler. A great glory he earned.

One day, he went to the forest for hunting. He came upon a spot where there was a well by the side of a lake. A female voice was calling out of the well, "Help! Get me out of the well please!" It was the voice of Devayani, the daughter of the Shukracharya, the guru of the demons. Infact, a bevy







of girls had come there for water sports. Besides Devayani, there were Princess Sharmistha, the daughter of the demon lord Vrishparva and her friends. While engaged in sports the princess came out of the lake and she put on the dress of Devayani as a prank. Devayani did not like it. She rebuked the princess for it. The angered princess and her friends had pushed Devayani into the well before going away.

Yayati happened to be there by a sheer chance.

The well was not too deep. With his long and strong arms Yayati pulled Devayani out of the well. Devayani happened to know Yayati. She said, "King! Perhaps the fate has got us two together. Your arm pulled me out of the well. I wish to stay in your arms for ever. Would you like to accept me as your life partner?"

Devayani was very pretty. Yayati looked at her carefully when she proposed, Devayani again spoke, "King! I am the daughter of the guru of the demons. Devayani is my name. Once I had put a curse on Kacha, the son of Guru Brihaspati. In turn he too put a curse to the effect that no brahmin youngman would accept me. According to that curse too you are my man and master."

Yayati accepted her proposal saying, "Devayani! I will marry you after getting the assent of your father."

Yayati returned to his capital after giving his word to Devayani, Devayani went back to her father Shukracharya and revealed all the incidents that had occurred at the forest lake, namely Sharmistha's ugly act, her meeting with Yayati and the marriage proposal.

Shukracharya was pleased to hear that Yayati had accepted to be his son-in-law but the act of the princess Sharmistha against his daughter enraged him. Devayani



could have died had Yayati not happened to reach there. Disgusted at the incident Shukracharya left the demon capital for the forest to live there in protest.

The displeasure of Shukracharya frightened the demon king, Vrishparva. He feared the guru may put a curse on him which could prove ruinous. He went to the forest to placate the estranged Guru. There, Devayani spoke on behalf of her father, "Sir, my father can return to the capital if my condition is accepted. I want wherever I go after marriage your daughter will come with me as my personal maid."

For fear of the curse the demon king agreed to her condition. His daughter Sharmistha also yielded to abide by it for the sake of her father.

So, Devayani got duly married to Yayati. Sharmistha went with her to Yayati's palace to serve as a maid. Although demonic, yet Sharmistha was a beauteous girl, sweet natured and extremely courteous. Yayati was charmed by her qualities. He began to love her secretly.

In the course of time Devayani bore two sons and Sharmistha produced three. When Devayani learnt that Sharmistha, in fact was her husband's mistress, she left for her father's home in a huff. When Shukracharya learnt about the betrayal of Yayati he put a curse on the latter, "Yayati! The youthful vigour for which you cheated my daughter and romanced with Sharmistha that will desert you. In youthful age you will become a shrivelled old man. You will!"

As a result of the curse Yayati suddenly became a very very wisened old man. He was very sad. He was mentally still lustful but physically he had become incapable. A very saddened and miserable figure, he went to Shukracharya



and prayed, "O holy sir! Your curse has ruined me. Please tell me some way the curse becomes ineffective or less severe. Please sir...."

Shukracharya took pity on him and relented, "If some young person donates you his own youth you shall again become a capable man."

Yayati begged from his friends, sons and relatives to donate him their youth but no one came forward. Who would want to exchange glorious youth with doddering and nigglesful old age? But there was an exception in his youngest son, Puru. He agreed to give his sire his youth. He said, "Father! This life and the body I possess is gifted to me by you. You have full right over all states and aspects of my body. My youthful vigour and virility too belongs to you. You may take it. I am proud that a state of my body is going to serve your cause. In this act I see salvation of my life."

Thus, Puru gave his youthful virility to his sire. Yayati felt youthful energies surge in his body. His old body renewed itself and got rejuvenated.

Now Yayati again indulged in lustful games. Then a stage came where he got fed up. His mind would refuse to participate in such mean acts. Infact, it became very boring and he came to hate it. Meaninglessness and futility of lust became very apparent to him. It was the prison that killed peace and rationality of mind. Infatuation aggravated was the lust. Disenchanted Yayati began to gain enlightenment and saw the spiritual path he should follow.

Yayati returned the remaining youthful vigour and virility to his son. Puru. With that he again became an old man. To his son he handed over the reins of the state and



retired to forest to make penance. In the service of Lord Yayati dedicated himself totally.

He was a changed man. He could virtually feel the presence of omnipresent Lord in everything. The new enlightenment redeemed his life.



## 30

## SYAMANTAKA GEM TALE

Through transcendental meditation Satrajita had propitiated sun-god Surya and received a divine gem as his reward. Syamantaka was the name of the gem. It was dazzling like sun. Wherever it was kept there no other thermal effect worked.

Once Satrajita went to the court of King Ugrasena wearing that gem in his neck. Due to the effect of the gem even the skin of Satrajita dazzled in flashes. The startled assemblage rose up in his honour.

Someone asked, "Is it embodiment of sun light?"

Krishna revealed to his court, "It is no embodiment of sunlight. Our Satrajita it is. He appears so due to the gem he wears."

He said, "Satrajita! That gem will do no good in your possession. Better present it to Raja Ugrasena."

But Satrajita refused to part with the gem. A few days later, his younger brother Prasenjita went hunting to the forest. For good luck he wore that gem having borrowed from his brother. He was riding a horse.

Unfortunately near a forest cave a lion killed Prasenjita and his horse in a surprise encounter. The lion went away after killing and feeding, leaving behind partly eaten dead bodies. The king of bears Jambvana used to live in that cave. When he came out of his cave he saw a dazzling gem in the neck of a dead body close to the cave mouth. Some







predator had killed a man and his horse. Jambvana took Syamantaka gem off the neck of the dead body and gave it to his children to play with.

Meanwhile, Satrajita got worrying when his brother did not return from the hunting trip from the forest. He had taken his divine gem. He suspected Krishna was behind his brother's disappearance as the latter had his eye on the Syamantaka gem. It had become clear on the day he had gone to the royal court when Krishna had asked him to surrender the gem.

Satrajita, in a suspicious mood spread the rumour that Krishna had killed his brother to seize the Syamantaka gem. Krishna too heard the rumour. To clear his name and bring the truth out he decided to lead a search for the missing man and the gem. With him were some respected and neutral citizens.

They reached the cave in course of the search where Prasenjita had been killed. They found the skeletons of a man and a horse there. The pieces of cloth, ring and horse saddle were certain proofs that the dead ones were Prasenjita and his horse. The gem was missing.

They decided to investigate the cave.

Leaving others outside, Krishna went inside. Before going in he said to others, "Please wait for me here. Do not leave until I come back."

Some distance inside the cave, Krishna found two humanoid bear cubs playing with the Syamantaka gem. Krishna tried to take away the gem. Just then, a huge humanoid bear arrived there. It was the bear king Jambvana.

He was the same character who had in earlier age helped Rama in his battle against the demon king, Ravana.



He stopped Krishna from seizing the gem from his kids. It led to a duel between Krishna and Jambvana. For 21 days they fought fiercely.

Victory or defeat could not be decided.

Meanwhile, the others who awaited for Krishna outside the cave gave up after two weeks and returned to Dwarka. They gave the news to all that Krishna had gone into a cave and failed to come out. Some yajnas and havans were organised to pray for his well being.

On the other hand, when even after fighting for 21 days Jambvana could not defeat Krishna, he started suspecting that he was dealing with an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. He looked carefully at his opponent and realised that his guess was not wrong. He apologised and prayed to Krishna.

Jambvana gave Syamantaka to Krishna and also his daughter to him in marriage.

Thus, Krishna returned to Dwarka with the gem and a new bride. The citizens celebrated his safe return. The Syamantaka gem was restored to Satrajita who appreciated the valour and honesty of Krishna. Better sense prevailed and he surrendered the gem to Krishna. As an apology he got his pretty daughter Satyabhama married to Krishna.

At Dwarka Krishna worked several miracles to set legends.



## 31

**GREATNESS OF FAMILY LIFE**

It was afternoon hour. The mind-born son of Brahma, Manu called his son Priyavrata and said, "Son! You are a grown up man now. Sit on the throne and take care of the affairs of the earth. That is the true duty of a ruler. Serve the cause of the people. Remember, a self serving and neglectful king suffers in the hell."

The son spoke, "Holy father! I don't want to get involved in the affairs of the state or ruling exercise. My aim is to dedicate life to the devotion of Almighty Lord. I will follow the true path."

The truth was that Priyavrata had heard the sermons of sage Narada that had made deep impression on his mind. The sage had revealed that only worship of Lord was true exercise in the world and everything else was a false illusion. The luxuries, comforts, joys and the riches of the world were all mirages which did not exist in reality. The name of God was the sole truth of the universe, he had said.

Priyavrata had made up his mind to follow his advice to the word. A vow he had taken to remain celibate all his life. No family and no throne was his resolve. He had decided to go to forest and invest his entire life in penance making and chanting the name of Lord all the time.

When Manu asked him to take charge of the reins of the kingdom he got thinking. And then he had declined to wear the crown. Although he held his father in high esteem and







considered obeying his orders his duty as a son, yet he refused to yield in this case as bigger issue was at stake. It involved the entire purpose of his life which was something beyond the father-son relationship. It was the matter of God.

The sermon of Narada was in control of his mind.

Priyavrata was a very capable youngman, brave and justice loving. Brahma always wished the creation to run smoothly and successfully. For that able rulers were required who could take charge of their respective domains and rule efficiently. So, when he learnt about Priyavrata refusing to accept the responsibility he got worrying.

He decided to intervene and reason with Priyavrata.

One morning, Priyavrata sat in meditation with his mind beamed into Lord Vishnu. Brahma materialised before him and spoke, "Son Priyavrata!"

Priyavrata opened his eyes and saw Brahma standing in front of him. He made obeisance to the lord and prayed, "Blessed am I to vision the Creator in person before me."

Brahma cast a thoughtful glance at him and asked, "Son, I hear you refused to sit on the throne. Is it true?"

"Holy father! Kingdoms and thrones are things of politics. The politics is a dirty game. It is full of manipulation, deceit, falsehood, distrust and betrayal. I have made up my mind to stay beamed into true Lord, Vishnu. The politics does not interest me and I shun it."

It made Brahma ponderous. After some mulling over he spoke, "Son, your pious thoughts please me. Indeed, remaining vested in the thoughts of true Lord is a very holy idea. Nothing is better than that. But you should not run away from the mundane responsibilities. You can sit on the throne, yet keep your thoughts beamed into Lord.



That will only make your thoughts beamed into Lord. That will only make you a better ruler. The very politics you consider dirty game will gain pious touch in your hands. I agree that most of the rulers are deceitful. But you will function as a benign ruler who works for the welfare of the people. You will become an example of ideal ruler and make us all very proud."

Priyavrata did not dismiss the reasoning of Brahma. He remained silent for a while. Then he spoke, "Holy father! I have decided to go to the forest and pray to Lord without getting distracted by other matters."

Brahma reasoned, "Your resolve is pious and holy. But son, the entire creation and everything in it represents him. He pervades through everything and everywhere. All objects and creatures are his different forms. All the people, men, woman, sons, daughters, relatives and strangers are his representatives. Serving them is also a different form of making penance. It is also in his cause. The best way is to live family life with mind connected to lord. You may go to the forest but only after doing your worldly duties and discharging responsibilities. Experience the physical life to become true spiritual seeker. You won't be able to dedicate yourself to Lord in totality without knowing what you could have missed in life."

It silenced Priyavrata. He bowed to say, "I will obey your command, holy father."

Brahma withdrew.

Now Priyavrata excepted to wear the crown and rule the kingdom. He married a royal woman named Barhishmati who bore him ten sons and a daughter. 'Urjaswati' was the name of the daughter. She got married to Shukracharya,



the guru of demons and became the mother of famed woman Devayani.

Priyavrata ruled the state and his mind was always in Lord. Every work he executed was dedicated to Lord. In the last phase of his life he retired to the forest to make penance with total dedication. After death he gained the domain of his Lord, Vishnu.

So are all faithfals redeemed who do their worldly duties with Lord in mind and thoughts.



## 32

**DISENCHANTMENT OF CHITRAKETU**

Chitraketu was the name of the king who used to rule over Shoorsena land, long time ago. He was a very religious person. Due to his pious dispensations the grace of God shone on that kingdom. There was never any loss of crops and trees yielded fruits of various kinds throughout the seasons.

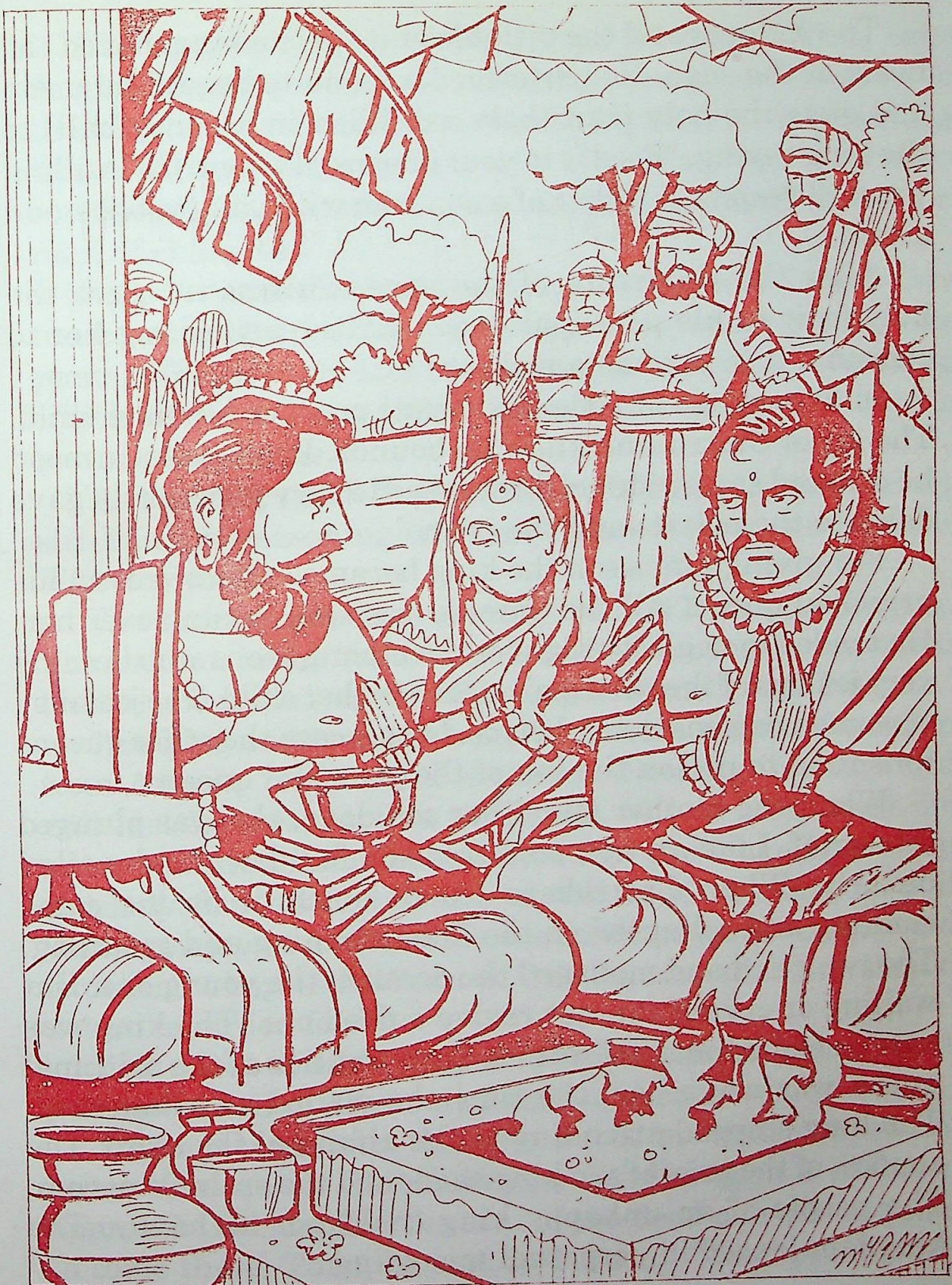
But there was a big flaw in the life of Chitrasena. He had no issue. It made him feel miserable. As he failed to provide heir to the throne his reputation was taking a beating amongst the people who thought a man without a son deserved little respect. So orthodox was their mindset.

Once sage Angira paid a visit to the palace of the King Chitrasena, the king received him with due respect and offered him a seat of honour. He thanked profusely to the sage for honouring him with the visit. The sage noticed that the king had a mournful face and his voice was dispirited.

The sage said, "King! Are you and your queens in health and happy? I detect a shadow of sadness on your face. May I know the cause?"

Chitraketu replied, "Sage, you know everything. Nothing is secret from you. You read my face and guessed the cause of my misery. But if you want me to spell it from my mouth I will. You know that I have no son or daughter. It makes me feel even less than an ordinary man. A king without a heir is a living woe. Tell me how can I beget offspring?"







The sadness and the pitiable state of the king moved the heart of the sage. He performed a yajna to beget him a son and gave the holy fruit (holy ash filled in a honey ball) to the king saying, "Feed it to your queen principal. God willing you will become a father of a son who will bring you joy and sorrow."

After the departure of the sage, Chitrasena gave the holy fruit to his principal queen Kritidyuti asking her to consume it to become a mother.

In due course of time Kritidyuti produced a male child. The joy of Chitrasena knew no bounds. In an ecstatic mood he ordered statewide celebrations. He very generously gave doles to the priests and the poor.

For giving him a son the king became extra sweet on his principal queen. All the time he was seen fussing over her. He tended to neglect or ignore the other queens who became very jealous of the principal queen and her child. The jealousy of women can enact any horror. In this case the other queens conspired to poison the son of the principal queen.

When the mother found her son dead, she was plunged into grief. Like an uprooted tree she fell down and wailed bitterly. When Chitraketu learnt about it he too came running and collapsed on the floor moaning and groaning. The two cried and mourned the death of the young one. But wailing or crying can not revive a dead one. The king was now an embodiment of sorrow. The condition of the principal queen was worse. All the time she wailed and lamented. The king stopped attending to the affairs of the state. The shadow of the grief of the king shadowed the entire kingdom. The people of an unhappy king could not be happy. The kingdom lapsed in perpetual mourning.



The tragedy of Chitrasena pained everyone. When sage Angira learnt about it he rushed to the palace to console the king. He preferred to come in disguise. Accompanying him was sage Narada. He was also disguised. The sage considered Chitrasena a king of sublime qualities and a man of character.

Sage Angira spoke to the king, "O master of men! One must not grieve for the departed one beyond a reasonable period. The grieving does not revive the dead one. Something which can not be regained should not be turned into a permanent sorrow."

To the disguised Angira, king Chitrasena said, "Holy sir! You are reasoning with me like a father or a mother. Who are you?"

The sage revealed his identity, "King! I am sage Angira. Your sorrow brought me here. I wished to console you when I heard about the tragedy. This here with me is sage Narada."

The king received the benefit of more words of wisdom from Angira, "This world is mortal. Nothing in this world will last forever. In this world one who is born must die sooner or later. Remember what I told you when I gave you the holy fruit? I had said you will beget a son who will bring you joy and sorrow. In his birth he gave you joy and in death he begets you sorrow. One that is perishable should not be mourned for."

The words of sage Angira failed to console the king. A person too full of grief turns deaf to wise words.

When Narada saw that the words of wisdom were not going to work on Chitrasena he decided upon a different approach. He invoked the soul of the dead one and asked it to come there. Then, he said to the soul, "Your parents are



grieving for you. Please enter the body you left for their pleasure and peace."

Soul said, "I have lived in several forms of bodies. I have had several fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters. Sometimes a mother of one life became my wife in another life. Other time father of my previous life became my son in next life. So I don't know who is my father or mother? I don't know these people any more."

The talk of the soul of his son gave a jolt to Chitrasena, The soul knowledge got kindled in him. His infatuation got banished. He now understood that the worldly relationships were meaningless and imaginary. The only true relationship was that of individual soul and Soul Supreme.

When the mind of the king was fully awakened he prayed to Angira and Narada to put him in the true path.

Sage Angira was very pleased to see the king having retrieved himself from the hole of sorrow. He taught the king a secret mantra, the chant of which could gain him the sight of Lord.

The king followed his advice and dedicated himself to the meditational chant of the mantra revealed by sage Angira. Lord Vishnu appeared to him and blessed. The life of Chitraketu was salvaged by grace of Lord and moksha after death was earned.



## 33

**SACRIFICE OF RISHABHADEVA**

Nabhi, the grandson of king Priyavrata had no son. To beget a son he performed several religious acts, yajnas, holy book recitals, charities and fast rituals but in vain. It was the sole cause of his misery and sadness.

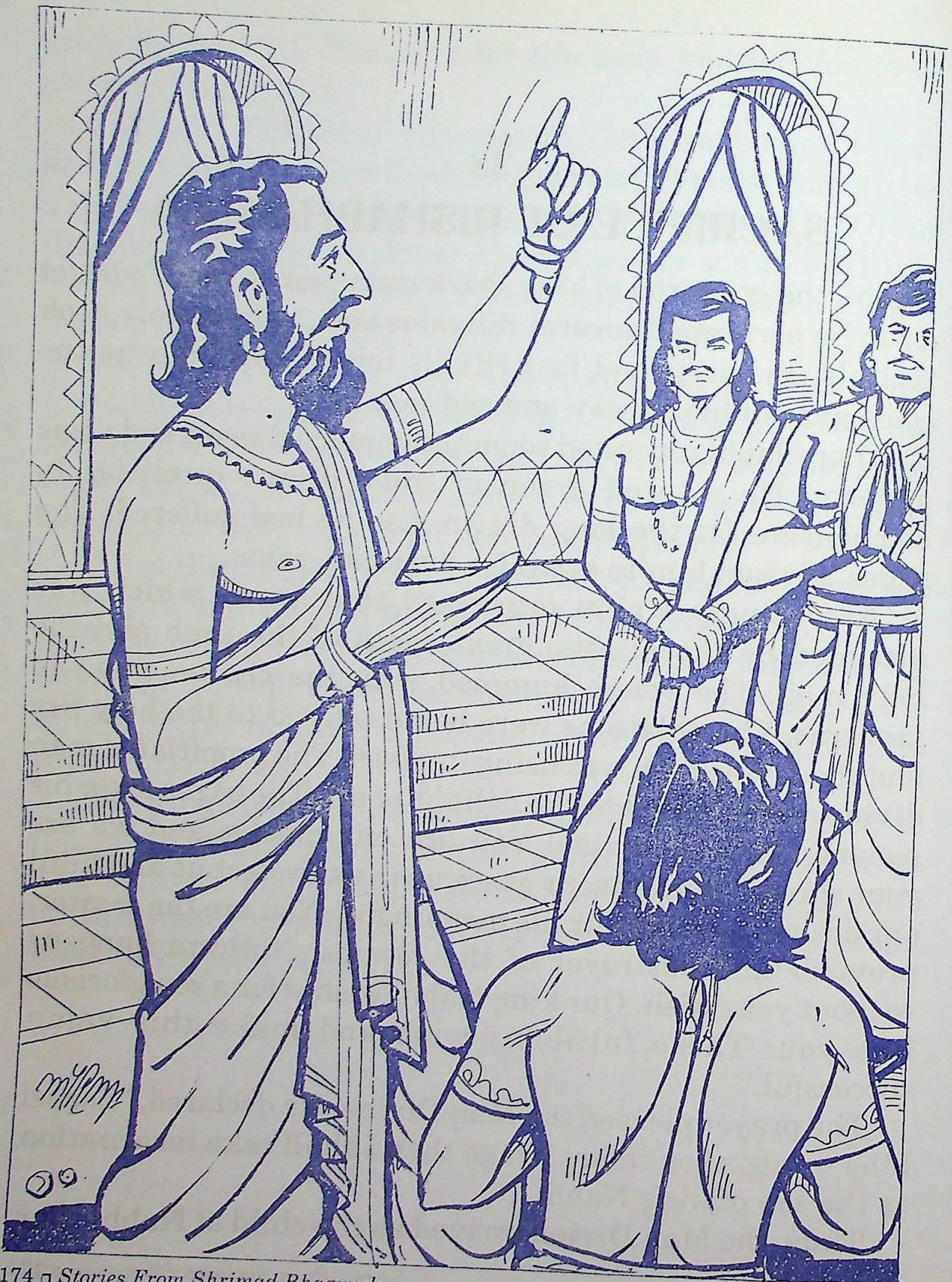
Then Nabhi consulted some accomplished sages and yogic experts. He wanted a son of some divine qualities to compensate for the long drawn woe he had suffered. The sages advised him to organise a special yajna.

Accordingly Nabhi organised that yajna which was attended by the priests, great sages of the time and the holy men. The venue hummed with the chorus chant of inantras. The oblations were being offered to the holy fire and the divine man was being invoked. The propitiated man divine materialised to the delight of all. The sages sang his paeans, "O man divine! You are our master and we are your slaves. Shower your grace upon us Protect us and fulfil our desires to make our life meaningful. You are the creator, provider and destroyer of the cosmos. Nothing happens without your wish. Our king Nabhi wishes for a son glorious like you. These fulfil his wish and make this yajna successful."

The prayer pleased the Man Divine. He declared, "Sages! If he wants a son in my image then I shall take incarnation as the son of king Nabhi."

Thus, the Man Divine arrived as the child of Nabhi. The







child showed all the expected divine qualities. He was charming like god of love, glowed like moon and exuded vibes of power. Nabhi named the child 'Rishabhadeva'.

Rishabhadeva grew up to adulthood surpassing all his contemporaries in noble qualities. King Nabhi handed over the reins of the kingdom to him and retired to the forest to make penance. Rishabhadeva adorned the throne and ruled magnificently. He got married and sired ten sons. Bharata was one of them.

But Rishabhadeva was a man of saintly nature. He was not attached to throne, kingdom, wife, sons and regal splendours. He was doing his duty as a ruler without the ego of being a ruler. He knew all the worldly things were meaningless and were mere mirages.

One day he called all his sons to announce, "All these royal luxuries, throne, kingdom and power are meaningless. False are the images created by the body, sensory organs, mind and imagination. The only truth and the reality is God. A man must try to know and understand the God present in him is truth and the reality is God. A man must try to know and understand the God present in him in the soul form. Until a man realises this truth he can not understand the reality of God. He remains trapped in the cage of ego and suffers all the woes of the mundane world."

After delivering the above sermon to his sons he departed for the forests. Without a second thought or a bit of secret he renunciated the power and family. He could do so because he was a divine person.

After leaving home Rishabhadeva gave up all the material coverings to be naked. Thus he set out to tour the lands in birthday dress. Everywhere he would say, "People!



Understand your real soul self. What you are doing is not right. The real cause of your woes is that you are failing to understand your true self. The day you understand your soul reality all your woes and problems would be over.”

It is said that Rishabhadeva used to embrace the roaming wild lions. And he would wear the poisonous snakes like garlands. He sipped or licked the spilled or dripped off venom of the snakes and stayed alive. His strange acts and spectacular feats amazed the ordinary folks and royals alike.

Then, roaming Rishabhadeva came upon a dense forest. When he reached there it was on fire. The wild creatures of the forest were screaming and running about in panic. Rishabhadeva laughed and jumped into the inferno. The fire died out but Rishabhadeva disappeared. One who arrives in this mortal world one day has to disappear in one way or the other. No one can stay in this world for over because the world itself is destined to perish one day.



## 34

## CURSE

When Chitraketu got disenchanted with worldly attachments and infatuations he moved about having left the home. His mind was getting enlightened with spiritual knowledge. He began to articulate his noble messages to the people.

Before that state he had suffered grievously from the sorrow caused by the death of his son. He was delivered from that melancholy when he put his mind to the thoughts of Lord. He was cleansed of all sorrows and woes. When equanimity of mind is gained all highs and lows of life get levelled.

On that day it was the morning hour. Chitraketu was going along lost in his thoughts. Then, he caught sight of an assemblage. It consisted of holy men, sages, Lord Shiva and Parvati.

Finding the Lord and his consort Parvati taking part in an ordinary meeting puzzled Chitraketu. His mind raised questions, "Oh! Lord Shiva sits here with his better half Parvati. Why do these divine people sit amongst mortals? How can he be the destroyer of the creation? How can he survive the Kalkoot poison? People consider him unborn, eternal and immortal. How is it possible for one who sits here in the ordinary assembly? How can he be the Yogi Supreme who always keeps his wife Parvati snuggled to his side? It does not make sense."

The doubting words muttered by Chitraketu got to the ears of Shiva and Parvati. Shiva maintained silence but







Parvati could not help reacting, "That king is very self conceited. He is not fit to be anywhere near Lord Vishnu. His mind is discriminatory. And because of that he fails to grasp the truth of Shiva. This fool deserves to take birth amongst the demonics. By my curse he will take birth in the line of stupid demons."

The curse spelled by Parvati made waves to the ears of Chitraketu. He prayed to Parvati, "Mother! I accept your curse. My mind wandered away and fell into a ditch of doubts. I have erred. Please forgive me."

The repentance of Chitraketu melted the heart of Lord Shiva. He said to Parvati, "Dear, you should not have put that curse on Chitraketu petulantly. He is a true devotee and faithful of Lord Vishnu. He too could have retaliated by putting a curse on you because he too has gained that power but he refrained using admirable self control. The love for Lord had made his heart very soft and cool. He is a true faithful."

But nothing could be done now. The curse had been spelled out. Parvati sighed deeply and spoke, "The curse must come true. But as a demon he would get punished by Lord and he would gain the highest domain in his after life."

It is believed that due to the curse of Parvati king Chitraketu was born as demon Vritasura. No one had any idea that a slight error of mind would make Chitraketu a lord of demons. From a faithful devotee of Lord he turned into the torment of gods. The two were diametrically opposite characters. The wise ones say that sometimes seemingly impossible thing happens by the force of events.



## 35

**IN SEPARATION FROM KRISHNA**

The Mahabharata war had ended. The destruction worked by it was visible all over. The air was loaded with grief and mournful mood. Everyone was counting the losses. The only gainers of the war were vultures, jackals and dogs for whom it proved a grand feast. Although victory had been earned and power seized, yet the mind of king Yudhishtira was not at peace. He was grim and mournful at the toll of men and material it had taken. Uttara, the widow of Abhimanyu was pregnant. She carried the sole remaining seed of Pandavas. It had not gone down well with Ashwatthama the son of Guru Dronacharya. He was jealous and revengeful. He had made up his mind to destroy the sole heir of Pandavas evolving in the womb of Uttara. Pandavas had totally destroyed the dynasty of Dhritrashtra. He wanted Pandavas to meet the same fate. Ashwatthama had already murdered five sons of Draupadi in sleep. Had he succeeded in killing the foetus of Uttara's womb that would have been the end of Pandava blood line. Now there no sons of Pandavas would remain to carry forward the line.

But Pandavas had insurance against this in the form of Lord Krishna. When Ashwatthama shot his deadly Brahmastra at Uttara's womb to destroy the foetus Lord Krishna used his divine power to block it from reaching the target. The foetus felt a glow enveloping it. That effect made the child the faithful of Lord even before it was born into







the world. In due course of time Uttara gave birth to a very promising male child. It carried no visible signs of the affect of weapon of Ashwatthama. The new arrival gave some hope and cheer to Yudhishtira. He called the soothsayers to predict the future of the new born. They made calculations and the royal pundits prepared the *kundali* of the child. They predicted, "This boy will become a very illustrious king. A God faithful he would be. He will always work for the welfare of his subjects. A true heir of Pandava traditions he would prove."

The boy grew up as Prince Parikshita. Although he died due to the curse of a sage but before that he did prove the predictions made at his birth correct. He earned quite a glory and reputation with his deeds as the ruler of Indraprastha-Hastinapur. To get over the ever persisting melancholy of the aftermath of Mahabharata war king Yudhishtira organised Ashwamedha yajnas thrice at the advice of Lord Krishna. But it made little difference. The miserable mood and guilty feeling of Yudhishtira did not go away totally.

After, a few days with Pandavas, Krishna went back to Dwarka. Krishna's home was also not in good shape. A curse of a sage had condemned his clan into drinking, gambling, infighting, sinning and other vices. They were hell bent on destroying each other. Yadavas were degenerating into a state from where their redemption was impossible.

The fate of Yadavas extremely saddened Krishna. Before his own eyes his Yadavas died one after another by eliminating one another in bloody clashes. Lord Krishna too decided to retire and go back to his divine abode. There was nothing left for him to do in the earth world. When



Yudhishtira did not get any news of Dwarka for a long time he sent Arjuna to find out what was happening there. After Arjuna left for Dwarka several sad things happened at Hastinapur that wrenched the heart of Yudhishtira.

Vidura had returned from the pilgrimage. One day he said to Dhritrashtra "Sir we have grown very old. The death should be stalking us. Why should we waste our time in Hastinapur aimlessly? Is there any point? Let us leave this place. Your position is especially pathetic. You had taken away everything Pandavas had and banished them into beggary. Their woman was almost disrobed in your court. Yet you are now living on the crumbs spared by them! What a shame!! Death is a better option. May be you have stopped thinking totally to live a vegetable life!"

Dhritrashtra never had stopped mourning the death of his sons. It left no space for him to think of anything else. The rebuke of Vidura jolted him and he felt remorseful. He left for wilds accompanied by Gandhari and Vidura. Surprisingly, the mother Kunti of Pandavas also decided to go with them.

The pleas and reasoning of Yudhishtira made no impression. She did not stay back at Hastinapur. She joined the old brigade. Shortly later all the old folks perished in the forest. The news shocked Yudhishtira. He became sadder and gloomier than before. To make matters worse Arjuna came back from Dwarka with tragic news, the destruction of Yadavas and above all the departure of their greatest friend Krishna to the heavenly domain. Pandavas and Draupadi cried for Krishna who had been their sole support all through their turbulent lives. They could not imagine life without Krishna.



For Yudhishthira the world had become a dark hole. No more there shone the light of Krishna. He and his brothers suddenly grew old. Yudhishthira went away to Himalayas with Draupadi and his brothers to get nearer to the heaven after putting Parikshita on the throne.

The time takes toll on everyone, even of incarnations.



## 36

## EVIL OF ANIMAL SACRIFICE

Barhi, the grandson of king Prithu was a very ritualistic character. He had blind faith in various deities. He had little time and trust for the highest divinity, Power Supreme. He worshipped various minor gods and deities who were supposed to get propitiated by rituals of the devotees and grant wishes. He preferred the deities who accepted animal sacrifices. While sacrificing an animal to a deity Barhi used to feel great joy and satisfaction as if he were doing a noble deed. Besides animal sacrifices he would perform weird rituals and occult practices.

Once Sage Narmada arrived at his palace who had heard about Barhi's blind faiths. Barhi welcomed the sage and got him beset on an ornate seat. Sage Narada talked about his rituals and remarked, "O king! I hear that you indulge in several rituals and animal sacrificing to propitiate various minor gods and deities. Do you ever think of the supreme lord, God?"

Barhi replied, "Sage! I think minor gods and deities are great. They are always in easy reach and rituals to earn their pleasure is known to all. It is so simple. Then God is everywhere and by that token he is present in the idols of demi-gods and deities as well. By that fact my rituals and worships are meant for him also although indirectly."

Narada reasoned, "King, it is true God is omnipresent and all minor gods and deities also represent him. But it is







not correct to say that worship of deities is worship of Power Supreme. He is in manifest and unmanifest forms. Lord is beyond all discriminations. But demi-gods and deities are discriminatory. God is a sea of mercy and compassion. Animal killings and gratifications do not please him. Only love and true devotion propitiate him. A man must only worship Power Supreme and not demi-gods or deities. One must put his faith solely in true God."

Barhi did not react to Narada's reasoning. He appeared to be thinking on his own lines. Narada again spoke, "King! You offer animal sacrifices to deities to earn their blessing. It is no good. It infact is sin, a brute crime. Violence can never please any true divine power. It may please some ghosts or ogres. Have you ever thought the animals you sacrifice to please your deity shall take revenge on you in after world or next life as Karma theory says?"

But Barhi did not look impresseed. He continued to put the faith in his weird rituals, occult practices and animal sacrifices hoping to earn the boons and blessings of the deities.

After his death in the after world he saw all those animals he had sacrificed lined up to settle scores. They were glaring at him hatefully and grunting horribly. Barhi got scared to see them. There were hundreds of them. He screamed for help. The agent of death laughed grotesquely at him saying, "Fool! The animals you sacrificed mercilessly before the deities are here to avenge their brutal murder. You have committed a great sin. Don't scream. No one is going to help you here."

Barhi pleaded in a meek voice, "But I killed them only to please my deities!"



The agent spoke, "Fool! No god or deity is pleased with sacrifice of animals. Only the evil ogres do. You seem to have taken ghosts or spirits for deities. Now, where are those gods and deities whom you tried to please? Why don't they show up to help you out? You shall pay the price for your heinous acts."

Barhi now repented and begged for mercy to no avail.

Only Power Supreme is worth our devotion. Those who waste time on weird rituals, sacrifices, demi-gods, deities or evil spirits repent like Barhi.



## 37

## ILL OF INFATUATION

There was a king in an ancient age. Puranjana was his name. He was concerned with his own joys and sorrows only. The happiness or grief of others meant nothing to him. He was an example of a selfish character.

Once Puranjana thought he must have an abode beautiful the likes of which should not exist anywhere else in all the three domains. It should be divine and unprecedented. So, he set out in search of such a place. He roamed around and surveyed several places but no place met his approval. He moved on rejecting one place after another looking for his dream.

In course of his search he came upon a garden. It was incredibly beautiful. There were flower beds of myriad shades and various fruit trees set in a very pretty patterns. The colourful birds sang on the trees. Cool and fragrant breeze was blowing. An ethereal peace reigned there. It appeared that god of love had set this up for himself to live in.

There was a beautiful town nearby that was bedecked with charming houses and magnificent edifices. But he could see no human movement there. It looked so deserted. There was silence and peace but that of a graveyard. Puranjana pondered over the strange fact, "The garden is extremely beautiful, the town is splendid but why is there is no human activity or presence? Who set up this garden and the town?? And why???" Then, he saw a young lady, very beautiful.







She was accompanied by her friends, maids and guards. Suddenly they had materialised. They were all coming towards him led by a five hooded serpent. It was all so mystical and puzzling.

Puranjana just stared at them truly baffled. When they drew near he asked, "Lady! Who are you? Whose daughter are you? Who created this garden and the town? Why I don't see anyone in the town?"

The beauty spoke, "I don't know myself who I am and who are my parents. And also I am unaware of the creator of this garden and the town. I can only tell you that I do live in this town. With me here are my friends and the males coming along are my servants. When I go to sleep at night this snake who leads my way, guards me. If you like this town you are welcome to live here."

Puranjana was already charmed over by the garden and the town. The beauty of the young woman stunned him. He could do anything to gain her. He married the woman and began to live in that mysterious town.

Living in that magic town he forgot all about himself. In love of the woman and the town he even forgot his creator. For him the town and the woman became the beginning and the end of life, universe and the purpose of existence and objects of worship. The outer wall of that magic town had several exit gates. Those exits led to other magic towns. Puranjana often used to go to those other towns through those exits. He would marvel at the different attractions of those towns and prided over his good fortune. The time went by and he continued to lead that charmed life. His wife bore him sons, many sons. Infact, she produced one hundred sons. He got them all married. The daughters-in-law crowded



up his palace but it was no problem. He had a township of palaces at his disposal. Surprisingly each daughter-in-law produced one hundred sons. Now Puranjana had a big crowd of grandsons. He became trapped in the relationships and affairs of his sons, their wives and grand children. He spent his entire time in caring for them. For him his wife, his sons, his grand children and his daughters-in-law were all that mattered. No time he had for others.

Puranjana had only one hobby. He was fond of hunting. Often he would go on hunting trips through a special exit on a chariot. On such trips he used to kill several innocent and helpless creatures.

One day he returned from one such hunting trip and did not find his wife in the palace. Her lady friends revealed that she had shut herself in a room in a melancholic mood. Puranjana ran to the room. He anxiously asked what was worrying her in concerned voice. She had tears in her eyes and pleaded, "Please dear, you must not go on these hunting trips. I feel very lonely and sad in your absence."

Puranjana promised her that he would never again go hunting. He swore by his soul. Since that day like a infatuated husband he followed his wife like a puppy dog. He would wag his tail obediently to whatever his wife said. He danced to her tunes literally.

Puranjana thought he was doing the wise thing for peace and happiness in life. He believed the business of life would go on just like that in love. Duties of life and obligations and the factors of *Karma*, faith and God if mattered, he would not care.

On that occasion it was a night hour. A big gang of robbers raided the town. They were in hundreds. The town got looted



and plundered. Several people got killed. When the dacoits were making away with the loads of the loot they grabbed Puranjana as he tried to plead with them. He was tied in ropes and dragged away.

Puranjana cried and begged for mercy. For the first time in decades he remembered God. He called out, "Oh my God! My Lord!! The dacoits are taking me away. What will happen to my poor wife, dear sons and darling grandsons?"

Yamaraja also laughed at him pitifully, "A big fool you are, man. The people you are worried over are happy at your death. They considered you a pain in neck. Your fussing over them was too irritating. Your demise is a big relief for your family. You suffered so much at the hands of the dacoits yet learnt nothing. The amount of love you invested in your family was a total waste. Only a fraction of it put in thoughts of God could have gained you heaven or moksha. You are fated to suffer more. Go back to earth and live a life of a woman. Enjoy all the woes and the miseries of that form."

Those who forget the reality of God getting waylaid by the mundane desires and worldly infatuations they suffer like Puranjana. A person must not overlook the spiritual reality of God where his final salvation lies.



## 38

## PEOPLE FRIENDLY PRITHU

When king Venu died, there remained no king to rule the earth. Venu had left no heir to the throne. The earth became like a widow who had no one to take her care and provide love. Anarchy spread all around. The robbers, criminal gangs, terrorists and tormentors took over the society and administration.

The reign of terror, fear and anarchy worried the sages. They pondered over the situation and thought of ways to set things right and redeem the earth. It was the morning hour. The sun rays were beginning to warm up the atmosphere. After the dawn ablutions the sages and holy men sat on the sand with glum faces to discuss the matter of bringing the earth under proper rule of law enforced by an able king. The most important task was to find a worthy man to wear the mantle of the ruler or create one by their collective spiritual powers.

The holy men agreed to an idea and pooled their yogic powers to create a divine man and a woman. The man was named 'Prithu' and the woman 'Archi'. Prithu was put on the throne after due coronation ceremony. King Prithu married Archi and they became a royal couple. Prithu began to rule the earth and end anarchy.

Prithu was a very pious character created as he was by the holymen. He was human but he had a part of the divinity of God in him. The divine glow oozed out of his body discernible







to the holy men only. He was the embodiment of valour. Whenever he set out on his chariot with bow and arrows in hands even the celestial lord Indra used to sweat for fear of Prithu turning towards the heavens.

It was morning time. King Prithu had just finished his prayers when a sound made its way into his ears, "Protect me, O king! We are starving to death!"

Prithu came out to find a group of men and women standing there with folded hands. He asked, "What is the matter, folks? What is your problem? What enemy is troubling you?"

The people prayed, "King! Earth has hidden all the crops in its interior self. There is nothing out there to eat, Humans and creatures are dying. In illness we don't get herbs. The plants and the fruit trees have also been hidden. Save us."

Their woe moved the heart of king Prithu. He said to his subjects, "Dear folks! You may go home. I will try to banish your troubles. I will force earth to open its treasures of the food grains and the herbal plants and fruit trees to you."

After so assuring his folks and sending them back, Prithu picked up his bow and arrow. He put an arrow to his bow string and took aim at the earth. The frightened earth showed up in the form of a cow.

She looked at the fierce mood of Prithu and ran away in panic. King Prithu ran after her with his arrow trained on his bow. The cow ran and ran through all the there domains. No one came forward anywhere to provide shelter or the protection to earth. All feared the valour and the courage of king Prithu.

When the cow did not find any saviour it stopped running and stood before Prithu. She asked of Prithu, "King! Why are you chasing me? Why do you want to kill me?"



Prithu replied, "You have hidden crops, fruit trees and medicinal plants inside you. My people are dying of hunger and diseases. Release all the crops and herbs or I will kill you."

Earth prayed, "I did all that to teach a lesson to the people. They were eating my food grains, drinking fresh water I provided and enjoying the fruits I produced, yet they indulged in evil deeds. Piety was dying. Faith was waning. If you want me to yield the foodgrains and medicines arrange for a calf and milk me."

The reasoning of Earth cooled down the temper of Prithu. He made Manu to act as calf and milked the cow. And with that symbolic act crops again began to grow in fields, the fresh water flowed and sick people got medicines to get cured like before.

After Prithu the sages, scholars, brahmins and demons also milked the cow in their own ways. The cow yielded them various other forms of treasures. No one suffered from wants any more. The life on earth moved on smoothly and pleasantly.

When the earth world became a repository of the treasures of various kinds Prithu became very popular and glorified. Even gods and demons sang his paeans.

As king Prithu gained respect in all the three domains, he decided to perform Ashwamedha yajna. One after another he performed 99 yajnas and the current one was 100th. It worried Lord Indra because 100 of those accomplished yajnas could gain Prithu the right to rule the heaven also.

So, Indra decided to defile the 100th yajna.

Meanwhile, king Prithu let his yajna horse loose as per the custom.

The son of Prithu followed the horse to defend it with his



army. The horse trotted through different lands as the prince stayed close to guard it. At one place Indra managed to steal the horse at a bend when the prince got unsighted.

The missing horse worried the prince. He looked around to trace it. He suddenly spotted a man with his ashwamedha horse at some distance. The man was Indra himself in disguise.

The prince challenged the thief for a fight. But the man ran away without fight, leaving the horse. The prince seized the horse and proceeded towards the capital. But Indra once again managed to steal the horse. The prince again challenged him and the thief again pulled a vanishing trick without fight.

The prince returned to the capital. He told his father about the two incidents of Indra stealing their horse to defile the yajna. It angered Prithu. He declared that he would raid the heaven and kill Indra.

His declaration sent panic waves all through the three domains.

Then a prophecy was heard, "King Prithu! Kindly give up the idea of killing Indra. Indra is a fragment of Lord Vishnu. You may not complete the 100th yajna. You shall any way get the credit of 100 yajna even for the 99 accomplished yajnas."

After hearing the prophecy, King Prithu decided to abandon 100th yajna midway. He reigned for a long time and served his subjects well. At the end of his rule he gave the charge of the kingdom to his son and left his mortal body then and there. His soul gained Baikuntha domain of Lord Vishnu. His legend will remain alive for ages to delight and inspire the posterity.

After Prithu the earth was called 'Prithvi' in Sanskrit-Hindi.



## 39

## EVIL VENU

When Dhruva departed for his heavenly domain he had handed over the reigns of the kingdom to his eldest son named 'Kalpa', also known by the name 'Utkala'. He was least interested in the affairs of kingdom and royal pleasures. He was equanimous. He used to practise no kind of discrimination. Thus, the throne was not to his taste. He refused to wear the crown. Then, the younger son of Dhruva sat on the throne. He was a righteous and a wise person. He ruled for a long time. Peace reigned during his tenure. The subjects were very happy under his rule. In the same line, King Anga was born. He was a man of noble qualities. Valiant and truthful, he was. The subjects adored their king. The illustrious Anga once decided to perform a grand yajna for the welfare of his kingdom. A host of great sages and renowned priests were invited to conduct it. The sacred materials were collected with great care. The waters from the holy rivers were brought in and the woods of the sacred trees specially gathered.

The yajna began on the scheduled hour. With the chant of mantras priests offered oblations into the holy fire invoking the names of various deities and gods. But the signs appeared which indicated that the divine beings were not accepting the offerings, The gods did not arrive in the spirit to be there.

The priests said, "King! The yajna is being conducted







with due custom. All the materials being used are pious and sacred. All the priests and the sages are of impeccable character and record. There is no discrepancy of any kind. But gods are not accepting the oblations offered to them and they are not here in spirit.”

The king was pained and hurt to hear this. He asked, “Have I done something wrong or unholy act? In the best of my knowledge I have not indulged in any such deed overtly or covertly.”

The sages said, “King, we know that you have done no wrong or committed any sin in this life. Everyone knows about it because your life has been an open book. May be, it is something done in the previous life. It is the *Karma* that dictates current life.”

King Anga pleaded, “Holy sirs! In the assembly here we have great sages, soothsayers, astrologers and holy men of spiritual knowledge and mystical powers. You can read the past and the future. Please let me know what deed of my past life casts this shadow?”

A sage revealed, “King, I think you have done no sinful act in this life or in any of your previous lives. You have one flaw in this life. You have no son. The deities do not accept oblations from a man who has no son. This fact has been revealed to my mind by a divine power. So, if you want to propitiate gods, first you may conduct *yajna* to beget a son. Until you sire a son, the deities would not accept oblations from you.”

So, king Anga conducted son-begetter ‘*Putreshti Yajna*’. The holy fire produced a divine person who had a bowl of magic *kheer*.

Giving the bowl to the king he advised that feeding the



contents of the bowl to the queen would beget him a son.

The king took the bowl thankfully and fed the kheer to his queen.

In due course of time the queen showed the signs of pregnancy. Then, one day she delivered a male child.

The astrologers studied the star and planetary configurations and named the child 'Venu'. One of its literary meanings was 'Bamboo', No other plant grows where the bamboo does. The stars of Venu showed some similar possibilities.

It was not a good sign.

As Venu grew up, the evil qualities of his character began to show up. He was bad. At a very early age he started drinking and gambling.

He went from bad to worse.

A notorious womaniser he became. His bad ways shocked the people. Anga tried to reason with his evil son and asked him to reform himself. But it made no impression on Venu.

He was born under an evil star.

When Venu refused to mend his ways, the sad and anguished father went away to the forest to make penance.

After his departure Venu descended on the throne. Now he was free to indulge in all kinds of vices and sins. He was a non believer.

He issued a royal order, "Now on no one in my kingdom shall recognise God, no prayers shall be sung, no yajnas and no worship. Anyone found disobeying shall be severely punished."

Venu let loose a reign of terror and tyranny. The priests, nobles and sages pleaded with the king to be kind and compassionate to the people and not to villify the Almighty



Lord. But Venu refused to tread the right path. Fed up with the evil ruler sages and nobles went to the forest. Venu degenerated into the most evil ruler.

Meanwhile the sages used their collective mystical powers to deal death to Venu to deliver the people from his tyranny. Sooner or later an evil person meets the same fate that Venu met.



## 40

**BRINGING GANGA TO EARTH**

In the dynasty of Satyavrata, king Sagara was a very illustrious name. He ruled the better part of the land mass. He was revered by all the great warriors and regents. It is said that he had 60,000 sons. After spreading his empire, Sagara decided to organise Ashwamedha yajna. The yajna horse was released to tread the lands. The army of 60,000 princes also set out to defend the horse if anyone dared to seize it to throw a challenge.

The celestial lord, Indra did not favour the yajna of Sagara. The accomplishment of yajna could gain Sagara a position equal to Indra. He decided to disrupt the yajna process by stealing the yajna horse. He stole the horse and tethered it in the ashram of sage Kapila stealthily. The sage was then lost in meditation.

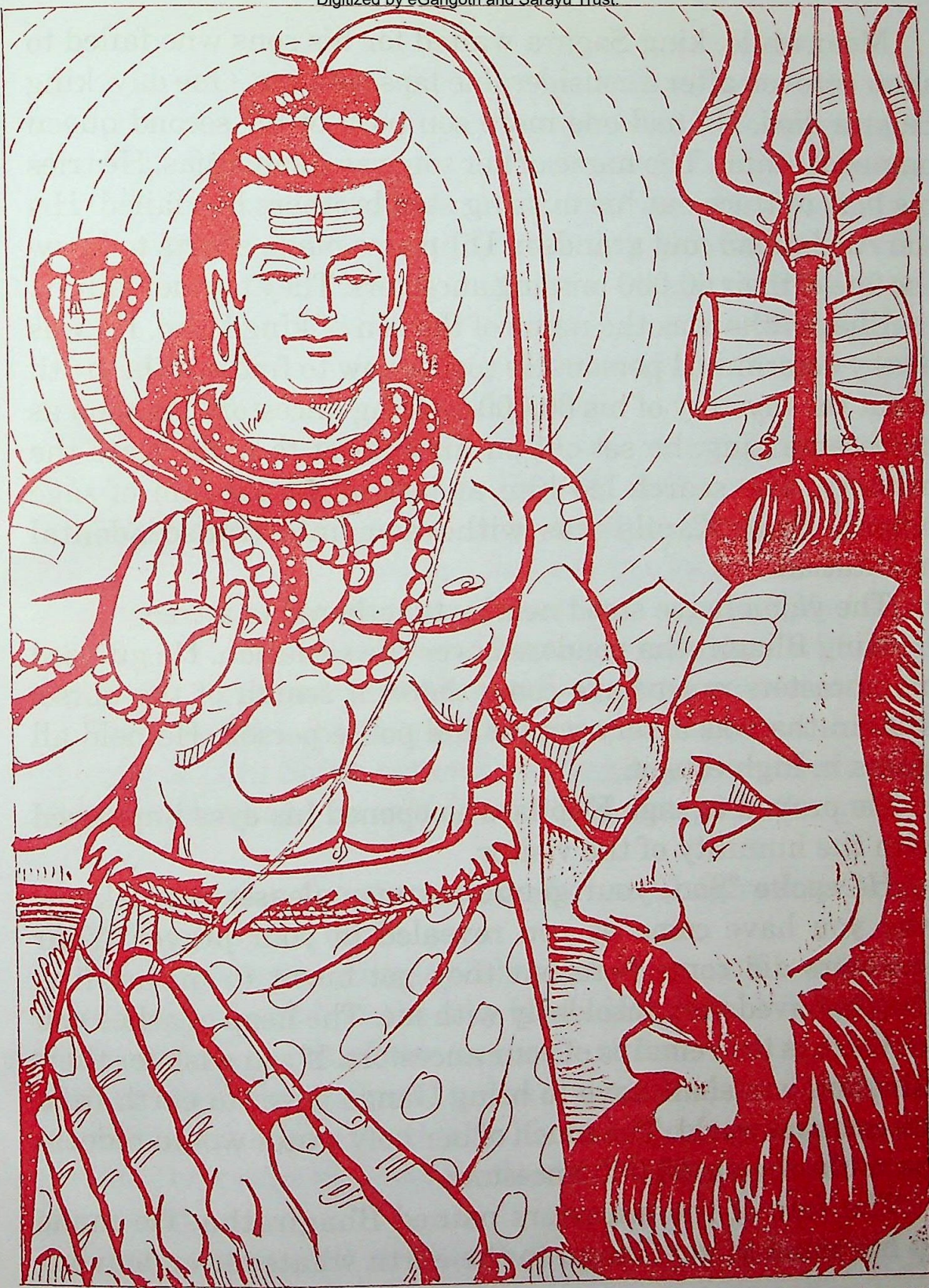
That spot today is known as Gangasagara.

When the yajna horse went missing, the 60,000 sons of Sagara searched for it frantically. In the course of the search they came into the ashram of sage Kapila where they found the horse tethered to a tree near meditating sage. The princes thought that the person impostoring a meditating sage was the horse thief. They began to abuse and rebuke the sage.

The invectives of the princes angered the sage. He opened his eyes to cast an angry glance at the offending princes.

All the 60,000 princes instantly burnt to ashes in the ire-fire of sage Kapila.







Meanwhile, king Sagara waited for his sons who failed to show up even after a considerable lapse of time. One day, king Sagara died. He had one more son born of his second queen named Keshini. The name of her son was Asamanjas. He tries his best to trace out his missing step brothers but failed. His son Anshuman and grandson Dilip also made efforts to know the fate of their 60,000 missing ancestors. They too met failure.

Bhagiratha was the name of the son of king Dilip. He was a very determined person. He took a vow to find out the truth about the mystery of his 60,000 missing ancestors. As soon as he became king, he set out on his chariot to investigate the mystery. The search led him at last to the ashram of sage Kapila. Sage Kapila was withdrawn into transcendental meditation.

The yajna horse stood nearby to tethered to a tree.

King Bhagiratha pondered over the situation. He guessed his ancestors must have come there in search of the horse. Bhagiratha was a very gentle and polite person. He held all elders in high esteem.

He prayed to sage Kapila who opened his eyes impressed with the humility of the visitor.

He spoke "Son, your gentle manner pleases me. I know why you have come as you revealed in your prayer. Your ancestors did come here but they got burnt in my ire-fire. They behaved very insolently with me. The heap of ashes you see there is the remains of your ancestors. If you wish for their salvation you shall have to bring Ganga down to earth from the celestial world. The touch of her holy water would redeem the souls of your 60,000 ancestors."

The fate of the ancestors pained Bhagiratha. He made up his mind to get Ganga to the earth whatever endeavour



it took.

King Bhagiratha gave the charge of the affairs of the state to his ministers and retired to Himalayas to make penance to achieve his objective. A very hard penance he made remaining relentless through heat, dust, rains, storms and cold. At last, Ganga appeared to him and spoke, "Son, pleased we are with your penance. I am ready to descend to the earth. But the problem is when I come down in full flow who will moderate it? If someone does not hold my flow I will fall through earth to plummet into in the bottom world."

The problem worried Bhagiratha too. He prayed to Ganga, "Mother! What do you suggest I should do?"

The courage, determination and devotion of king Bhagiratha had won the heart of Ganga. So, she gladly revealed, "Son, only Lord Shiva has the power to control my flow. You must propitiate him. If he agrees to moderate my flow I will grant your wish and come to earth to salvage your ancestors."

The revelation encouraged Bhagiratha. He began to make penance of Lord Shiva without wasting any time. Shiva duly got propitiated and he said, "I will hold Ganga in the mats of my hair."

After hearing the successful effort of Bhagiratha, Ganga flowed down to the earth.

There are many schools of thought about it. Some believe Ganga originated from the holy bowl of Brahma. While others think she came out of the toe nails of Lord Vishnu. In the celestial world Ganga flowed by the name 'Mandakini'. Anyway, down on earth Shiva stood with his feet firmly planted on the ground. He was looking skywards with his long matted tresses opened out.

Ganga stream fell on Shiva's forehead and got trapped in



the tresses. Not a drop fell on the earth. Ganga loved the Shiva's tress abode so much that she forgot to flow out.

Meanwhile, Bhagiratha waited for Ganga to stream out of the hair of Lord Shiva but she would not. Now he faced another problem. If Ganga remained trapped in the hair of Shiva his entire mission would become meaningless.

Bhagiratha again made penance to please Shiva. When Shiva appeared to him he revealed his problem. In response Shiva duly released Ganga from his tresses.

So, Ganga started flowing on the earth after emerging out of Gomukha. Her water, flowed fast cascading down the hilly terrain. In her wake she swept away the river side hut of a sage named Janhu. It angered the sage. With his mystical force he froze the flow of Ganga. Some scholars think he put her in his holy bowl. To get over the hurdle Bhagiratha had to make penance again. Seeing the determination and devotion of the king, the sage allowed Ganga to flow again.

Ganga resumed her journey towards the Bay of Bengal. According to a legend Bhagiratha led her riding his horse ahead as Ganga followed. The king led Ganga to the ashram of sage Kapila where the last remains of his ancestors lay in a heap. The souls of 60,000 ancestors of king Bhagiratha flashed towards the heaven having been delivered. After originating from Gomukha, Ganga ended into Bay of Bengal after a passage of thousands of kilometres. The place of her confluence into sea is known as Gangasagara today. On Makar Sankranti day a festival is held there and faithfuls take dips in Gangasagara.

This story is recited there on that occasion.

According to sage Vyasa, the reciter and hearer of this holy tale gets cleansed of all sins.



## 41

**FISH INCARNATION OF LORD**

Before the end of a Kalpa, due to the carelessness of Brahma, a great demon had managed to steal away the holy Vedas. Hayagriva was the name of that fiery demon. In the absence of Vedas, the knowledges had disappeared. The darkness of ignorance spread all around. The sins prevailed and the dark forces came into ascendance. To save the situation Lord Vishnu took incarnation as a fish and reclaimed Vedas after slaying the demon.

This story is very fascinating—

Before the end of Kalpa, a noble king was making penance. His name was Satyavrata. He was a pious and very generous character. It was morning hour and the sun had come up. The king was taking dips in holy Kritmala river. To offer water he took a handcupful of it from the river. A small fish too was there in the handcup. Satyavrata released the tiny fish into the water.

The fish said, “King! The big creatures of the water eat smaller ones. Some big fish would eat me. You must get me to a safer place or protect me.”

The kind king put her in his water bowl and took it to the palace. Overnight the fish grew too big to survive in the bowl.

It said to Satyavrata, “King, the bowl is too small for me. Get me to some spacious place or water body. I feel uncomfortable here.” The king put the fish in big pitcher of







water. Overnight she had grown too big for the pitcher too.

At her request the king transferred her to a pond.

Very soon the pond also felt small for the fast growing fish. Now the king had to put her in sea. But incredibly the fish continued to grow bigger and bigger. One day, she spoke to Satyavrata, "King! The sea too is now too small place for me. Please get me to a bigger place."

Satyavrata was truly amazed. He had never seen such a fish or had ever imagined. He spoke to the mysterious fish, "I am drowning in a sea of puzzle. Tell me, who are you? How do you manage to grow so fast? My wisdom tells me that you are the Creator himself. You are God. Why have you taken incarnation as fish?"

Indeed it was Lord Vishnu as fish.

He said, "A demon called Hayagriva has stolen Vedas. Ignorance and sins have taken over the worlds. To deal with that demon I have become a fish. Seven days from today it will rain to spell doom. Entire earth will get drowned in the water. There will be nothing except water. A boat will come to you. With the seeds of all grains and herbal plants you shall sit in that boat with seven sages. Then I will show up to you and enlightenment shall be gained by you."

Satyavrata waited for the doom. On the seventh day, it rained rivers of water and sea level rose up to swallow all lands. Then, the boat appeared. Satyavrat got into it with seven sages with bags of grain and herbal seeds.

The boat floated. Nothing was above water. Suddenly, the fish incarnate appeared. Satyavrata and the seven sages sang the paeans of Lord.

As the Lord had promised he imparted the ultimate



knowledge to them, "I am present in all the creatures and the objects. All are equal in the world. The creation is mortal and God is the only eternal truth of this universe."

When the sea waters calmed down, the incarnate Fish killed the demon, Hayagriva and retook the possession of Vedas. Lord gave the Vedas to Brahma. So, the knowledges were saved and the creation redeemed from ignorance and the forces of darkness.

Thus, incarnates God often to save the world.

□□□









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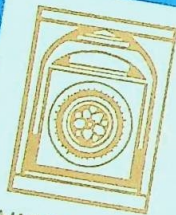
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